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No. 115.

NEW YORK, AUGUST 15, 1900.

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NEW AMERICAN DIME NOVEL EXCHANGE

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OR,

ADVENTURES AFLOAT AND ASHORE.

AMERICAN DIME NOVEL EXCHANGE

2 EAST 23rd ST., NEW YORK CITY

By Capt. Thos. H. Wilson.

CHAPTER I.

UNTOLD WEALTH.

A beautiful tropical moon was shedding an effulgence of mellow light over the Island of St. Thomas some years ago, when a large bark might have been seen running along the iron-bound coast, heading for a jutting strip of land, which formed one side of an inlet opening on a pretty little lagoon. The waves of the southern seas snap and sparkle with phosphorus very prettily, and this is more especially noticeable in the wake of any craft in the water. The vessel alluded to was a very handsome bark of about 500 tons burden, and stood away before a free wind, with yards squared and mainsails started off to starboard. The hull was painted black, the spars were freshly scraped and slushed, the rigging all taut, and the canvas filled away as white as a cloud. Beautiful as the vessel was, however, its owner could be called nothing but a veritable demon, for this cruise was made with a dark object in view. The person who owned the "Dragon," as the bark was named, was a young man of perhaps thirty. He stood on the forward deck talking to his first mate, with a telescope in his hand, with which he had been viewing the verdure-clad shore. Attired in navy blue uniform and cap, he possessed a fine figure, and a graceful black mustache adorned his thin lips. There was something repellent in the glance of his dark eyes and the expression of his square features, but, despite the instinctive distrust with which he inspired honest men, there was much to be admired about him.

His mate was also in uniform, and wore a short, brown beard.

There was a certain neatness about the vessel that was striking, for not a coil of rope or anything else was out of place, and the half dozen sailors on deck were even then busy polishing up the brass work, and attending to many things which are usually neglected on most vessels.

"Do you think we can get an anchorage in the lagoon, Mr. Redfield?" the mate was asking. "You can see from here that the channel is very narrow."

"Oh, yes, Mr. Taylor," replied the other. "I have sailed in and out of that channel since I was a boy; and as I see that the tide is half flood, I know that we have at least half a fathom. Besides, it is imperative that I reach Mortimer Hall to-night, for Royal Mortimer is dying, and I must discover

the secret which he has so sedulously guarded for five years before he departs this life. Dom Pedro, of Brazil, is not the kind of man to leave a stone unturned to discover where the diamonds have gone which were taken by my uncle and Pablo from the mines."

"You said the diamonds disappeared?" said the mate, querulously.

"And my uncle with them."

"What were they valued at?"

"A fabulous sum—perhaps \$500,000 or more."

"Did they come from the Brazilian mines?"

"Yes. Royal Mortimer was the superintendent of the mine. He had over one hundred negroes working for him. It had been a rich-paying mine—the property of the government. Suddenly the mine's yield seemed to be exhausted. The emperor sent official examiners. When they arrived it was night, and they decided to defer their examination until the next day. Mortimer had received intelligence of their expected arrival, and when they came he treated them cordially. After dinner one of the party—the doctor of the scientific academy—expressed a desire to see the mines. My uncle offered to personally show them to him, and he accepted. Calling one of the blacks—a huge, surly-looking fellow named Pablo—he ordered the negro to precede them with a lantern, and they went out of the house, leaving the guests at the table discussing the projects for the following day. Entering the mouth of the best yielding shaft, they proceeded some distance. The negro went first, the doctor came next, and Royal Mortimer brought up the rear. It was very dark in the shaft and the path rough, so that the doctor, who was unaccustomed to it, frequently stumbled.

"Presently they came to a shrine, in an alcove, of the Virgin. It was a marble figure in a niche, with a basin of holy water at its base, and several small lamps were burning about it. The doctor was struck with surprise at the sight."

"And any one else would be," said Taylor, with a laugh.

"It is a Catholic country," said Redfield, "and the miners had erected it. The doctor examined it, and placed his hand on the edge of the bowl containing the holy water. A smothered exclamation of anger from Pablo aroused his attention, and glancing at the Herculean negro, he was surprised to see that his face was distorted with rage, and his eyes blazing like livid coals of fire.

"Take your hand from that!" exclaimed Pablo, in choking tones.

"What for?" was the doctor's natural inquiry.

"I am the keeper of the shrine," said Pablo, "and none touch it but myself."

"Let me appeal to you, Mortimer," said the doctor, laughing. "Is it true?"

"Yes," replied the superintendent. "They revere the shrine to devotion."

"The doctor let go the basin, and in drawing away his hand the sleeve of his coat got caught on a jagged edge, and pulled it from the niche.

"It fell to the floor with a crash, spilling the holy water and breaking to fragments.

"A wild howl escaped the gigantic negro, and he dashed his lantern to the floor.

"His design was very apparent, but the lights on the roughly extemporized altar frustrated him. They showed a hollow cavity, in the top of which the basin rested, and the cavity was literally crammed with rough diamonds of all kinds.

"You can imagine the astonishment of the doctor.

"He gazed at the superintendent, but that personage was apparently as much surprised as he was. Then he recalled to mind what the negro did.

"Treason!" he unwittingly exclaimed, betraying that he had exposed a great secret. "The thieves are discovered. The mines have continued yielding, but with thievish instincts you have made no return of the jewels you found, but instead have been hiding them here until you accumulate enough to make it an object to abscond with them. The emperor shall know of your perfidy!"

"Before God and man I swear I knew nothing of this!" asseverated Mortimer, solemnly.

"Very likely," sneered the doctor. "You must answer before a tribunal. These gems have indubitably been mined and placed here, Royal Mortimer."

"If so," replied my uncle, "I knew nothing of it. The negroes are accountable for it, and not I. Pablo claims to be the keeper of the shrine; maybe he can throw some light on this seeming mystery," and as he said this he faced the black.

"What have you to say about this, sir?" he demanded of him sternly.

"Unable to conceal the frightful emotions that assailed him, Pablo was leaning against the rocky wall almost paralyzed. His eyes gleamed in the darkness like those of a serpent, and they heard him laboring for breath as if he were strangling. An ominous silence ensued for a few moments, and then my uncle heard a sickening thud—the doctor felt the crash—it seemed as if something struck him on the top of the head. He reeled blindly a moment, and then his senses fled, and he fell over on the damp floor of the shaft. When again he recovered consciousness he found himself in the superintendent's house, with daylight streaming in upon him through the open window. All his friends were standing about his bedside with anxious faces, closely watching him. Inquiry elicited the news that he had been found several hours previously by his friends, who became alarmed at his protracted absence, lying in the same spot where he fell. Nothing had since been seen or heard of Pablo or of the superintendent. Search was made for them all the morning, but without avail, and then the doctor told his friends what occurred. The evidence of the case pointed to Mortimer as a thief, and the negroes adjuncts to his robberies. Each of the laborers was cross-examined to discover if they were accessories, but none betrayed their guilt, so the examiners desisted from sheer want of ability to learn anything further. The culpability of Mortimer and Pablo seemed beyond all question, for with their disappearance the diamonds were gone too."

"That was a sharp game," commented Taylor.

"You have not yet heard the strangest part of it," said Redfield, after another glance ahead at the opening into the lagoon which they were approaching rapidly. "The examiners searched the surrounding country for miles, but did not find the two missing men."

"Did they make their escape?" asked the mate.

"Some natives told the pursuers that two men answering to their description were seen on horseback pushing toward the north-eastern seashore, and the pursuers followed these men several days. When they reached the seaboard town their course brought them to, they discovered that the negro and white man had reached there a day in advance of them, and had embarked on a vessel bound to New Orleans. It was a schooner named the 'Venus.' At this time the divided factions in the north of South America were continually at war of rebellion, and most of the coastwise vessels carried guns. The pursuers of Royal Mortimer and Pablo knew that if they followed the men they might expect a hot reception, and therefore began to look about for a suitable craft. Fortune favored them. They fell in with the owners of the 'Venus,' and to their surprise learned that when the two fugitives had boarded the vessel they found it in charge of two men, to whom they offered a large bribe of diamonds to carry them away. The men became suspicious of so many diamonds and refused, whereupon they were forced at the muzzles of carbines to raise the sails and put off to sea. On the first day out one of the men was shot for disobeying orders, and thrown overboard by the negro. The pursuers meantime embarked in a vessel, followed the other, and picked up the mutineer, who was half dead from exhaustion, he having sustained himself a whole night by clinging to a plank which he was lucky enough to find in the water. From him they learned the course the vessel took, and followed it several days until it hove in sight."

"Had the emperor cognizance of what happened?" asked Taylor.

"They sent him word, and acted under his instructions."

"Well, did they capture the men?"

"No. The schooner was convoyed by a large vessel from the Isthmus of Panama—a mortal enemy of the Brazilian ship. When they were close enough a combat ensued, during which a shell struck the 'Venus' below the water-line, and she sunk, carrying the negro down with her, he having been in the cabin at the time she went down. One of the two men who stood on her deck was shot, and the other one, believed to be Royal Mortimer, sprang overboard, and swimming to the Nicaraguan vessel with a bundle strapped on his back, was taken on board. The Brazilian could not stand the heavy cannonade the other poured upon her, and fled."

"And the treasure?" queried the mate.

"No one knows what became of it, except Royal Mortimer."

"Is it not likely it went down with the 'Venus?'"

"Such might be the case; if it is, it cannot be recovered, I'm afraid."

"Why not? They knew where the vessel foundered, didn't they?"

"Unfortunately, they were in such a hurry to get away they had no time to take their bearings, so, of course, could not locate the sunken vessel in the deep sea. At that time I was clerk to the English consul-general. Last year, hearing the facts, I went to the emperor, and offered my services to look for Royal Mortimer, withholding the fact that he was my uncle. The result was that the government gladly accepted my offer, fitted out this bark, made me a present of it, gave me money to follow my search, and after I hired you and my crew I knew just where to go after my uncle. I had been in correspondence with him for some time, and learned from the tenor of his letters that he had left South America, and had gone back to Mortimer Hall, on the island of St. Thomas,

where I was born and brought up under his fostering care, at the death of my parents, with his son Joe."

"And this is where we are bound for now?"

"Yes. If I discover where the jewels are I will get a magnificent reward."

"But suppose they are beneath the sea?"

"In that case I will, if I ascertain where they are, recover them."

"For the government?"

"For myself."

"What!" cried Taylor, starting.

"You know my intention now. I am not a fool. I would be to return them to Dom Pedro."

"Are you in earnest?"

"Of course I am. I need, though, one good co-laborer."

"I infer you wish to enlist my services?"

"Will you take up my golden offer?"

"Heart and soul," replied the other, "and thank you for it."

"Make my interest your own, and we will both become rich."

"You can count on me for anything," replied Taylor, as the compact was made.

"That is saying a good deal," said Redfield, with a peculiar look on his swarthy face, "for the reason that Royal Mortimer may refuse to divulge the secret of the whereabouts of the treasure, in which case, if we arrive in time, we must force him."

"If we arrive in time?" echoed Taylor in perplexity.

"I told you he was dying, and it was three weeks ago that I heard it, for the mails are not very frequent between St. Thomas and Cuba."

"What ails him?"

"Heart disease. Ah! there is the opening to the lagoon now. I will take the wheel and guide the 'Dragon' in, while you go forward and heave the lead. Pass the word to all hands to stand by to work her in."

As he spoke he went down from the forward deck, followed by his mate, and walking aft, relieved the quartermaster of the wheel, while Taylor called all hands on deck. There were a dozen in the crew, and as soon as the ship began to wear around, under the direction of the mate the yards were trimmed around, stay-sails hauled taut, and mainsail sheet trimmed in. The "Dragon" heeled over as the stiff beam wind drew the canvas, and she stood in on the starboard tack for the opening at the headland. As soon as they got in shoal water the sheets were eased off and she glided along more slowly. Redfield ordered all lights extinguished and no noise made. There were gaunt palms near the shore, and some shrubbery girding the shingly beach, and as they came abreast of the channel, and glided in between the shelving banks, the mate hove the lead, calling out at intervals the depth of water. It was hardly necessary, as Redfield was well acquainted with the channel, but he wished to be sure, as the sands of the sea have a trick of shifting at times in the most erratic manner. The channel was about ten fathoms wide and almost straight for a short distance, when it suddenly opened into a small, marshy lagoon. As they glided into the lagoon Redfield put up the wheel, and the "Dragon" came up into the wind. The next moment the sailors ran down the stay-sails, and head-sails were clewed up to the yards unfurled. The mainsail was left standing, and a small kedge anchor was dropped to keep the bark from drifting ashore. These preparations were made for the very good reason that they did not know how suddenly they would have to hurry out of their anchorage. Just then, as Redfield let go the wheel and cast his glance at the head of the lagoon, he perceived another vessel of pure white anchored close to the shore, where a small dock ran out to the water.

It was a sloop of about twenty-five tons burden, and as beautiful a vessel as ever was built, her long counter-stern bearing the name "Nymph." She had a deserted appearance,

as also had each side of the lagoon, but up at the bend of the waters was a thick growth of trees, and in their midst could be seen several blinking lights, while faintly they could hear the tinkle of a banjo, and a young negro voice singing a regular Southern camp-meeting song.

Just as Redfield heard these sounds Taylor approached him.

"Are you going ashore?" he asked.

"Yes," replied the other. "We have no time to lose. There is a militia barracks only half a mile inland, and if it comes to trouble we must be prepared."

"What do you mean by trouble?" asked the other.

"Nothing in particular, excepting that I will not return to this vessel unless I get some information on the subject which interests us."

"Shall I order the quarter-boat down?"

"If you please. Are you armed?"

"I have a revolver."

"That is sufficient. Two men will be enough to row us ashore."

"I presume that is the house up among those trees?"

"That is the house."

The mate passed the word to a couple of men, and a moment later the boat went down in the water, and the two officers descended a rope ladder into it.

They cast off the moorings, the two sailors plied their oars, and they were rowed ashore where the trees grew down to the water's edge.

Bidding the men await their return, Redfield and Taylor took a graveled path that brought them through a magnificent arcade of trees, among the foliage of which huge firebugs darted about emitting a bright radiance.

A short walk brought them to a large, one-storied building built of clay of a peculiar burnt red color, the walls of which were covered with creeping vines. It stood in the midst of the park, and there were bright lights in all of the huge, iron-barred windows. Making a circuit of the building, which had a courtyard in the centre, they saw several out-buildings.

A young negro boy of about sixteen had been sitting in the doorway of one of these buildings playing the banjo and singing, and they just had time to get behind a bush as he laid aside his instrument and walked over to a huge postern gate in the wall of the main building, which he opened.

The boy passed through the gate, and left it open after him, and the two men waited a few minutes, then followed him. Passing through, they found themselves in a square courtyard, upon which opened the rooms of the house on all sides. In the centre was a fountain, and all about were boxes and gardens, filled with beautiful plants. They saw several negroes and negresses at the further end of the yard, near the part of the building used as a kitchen, but keeping out of the moonlight, and well in the shadow of the vines and bushes, they crept along the walls of the house until they came to an open door, through which they saw the negro boy enter.

It led into a dark bedroom, which they entered, and saw a door of communication opening between the room and a larger apartment which was brilliantly illuminated. Embroidered silken portieres covered the doorway, and ensconcing themselves behind them, and drawing them slightly apart, they had an uninterrupted view of the interior of the other room.

The floor was of marble squares, and a canopied iron bed stood against the wall. There was a man with a thin, ghastly face lying on the bed, at the foot of which stood the negro boy, while seated on a willow chair, of such ware as the room was furnished in, sat a youth of eighteen, holding the invalid's hand. He had light curly hair, white skin, and clear-cut, bold, handsome features. There was a look of woe on his face just then.

"That is Joel!" whispered Redfield, huskily.

"Hark!" interposed the other, cautiously. "The old man is spe——"

"Yes, Joe," the sick man was saying in feeble tones, "I am dying, but before I go I want you to promise to follow my instructions, without deviation. This paper contains proper directions, by which you can locate the deep sea treasure, and once it is in your possession, return it to its rightful owners, and vindicate your father's name of the foul blemish now staining it."

"It is just what we are after!" whispered Redfield, excitedly. "We must secure that paper this night, John Taylor, if we risk our lives to get it!"

CHAPTER II.

TWO VESSELS GO TO SEA.

It was with the utmost difficulty that Taylor could prevent Redfield rushing into the room and tearing the paper forcibly from the hands of the sick man, but he finally recalled him to a sense of his position, and advised him to remain quiet, by which they would be apt to gain much valuable information.

"Oh, father, don't say you are dying!" the youth exclaimed bitterly.

"My son, I believe that concealment of so important a fact is wrong. I have not got much fortune to bestow upon you, but what I have is in the hands of my sister in New York, who will hold it in trust until you are of age. I have but one word of advice to give you, though, and that is to beware of your cousin, Alfred Redfield. He is a bad, unscrupulous man, and would not hesitate to do you the worst injury. I have discovered that he has recently gone into the employment of the South American government to hunt me down, in order to discover the whereabouts of the diamonds Pablo Hernandez stole from the mines of which I was superintendent."

"You can depend, father," said Joe firmly, "that I will vindicate you."

"I know you will, my boy, and when you have shown to the world that Royal Mortimer was not the thief he was accused of being, you will have done the greatest boon I could ask for. Let me repeat to you, so that you may never forget it, that when Hernandez felled the doctor to the ground with an assassin's blow, seized the diamonds and threatened my life with his pistol, I had no recourse but to do as he ordered me. It was at the point of his revolver he marched me from the mine, and once we were at a safe distance, he clearly explained to me that the doctor would think that I had a hand in the crime of attempt to murder and the robbery of the diamonds. I saw in an instant that as soon as we were missed together they would certainly think we were accomplices. So what could I do? If I returned imprisonment awaited me, for my story would not be believed. It was for that reason alone that I acceded to flight with the real thief in order to save myself, and thus they condemned me with him."

"Poor father," said Joe, sympathetically, "you are indeed a victim of circumstances, and as you are sure that these diamonds are yet in the locker in the cabin of the 'Venus,' be assured I will get them."

"You cannot miss the place," said his father, "unless some adventurous hand has taken the mark away. I have already told you that when I saw the 'Venus' sinking I threw overboard an anchored buoy. The tides and storms, though, of the past five years may have destroyed it."

"The reckoning on the paper is sufficient for me," said Joe.

"Are you sure you have all you require for a long voyage on the 'Nymph?'"

"Ten men are asleep in her now, and there are provisions for six months."

"Good!" commented the other. "And you will start to-morrow?"

"Father, I cannot go away and leave you here sick."

"By to-morrow I will be a corpse."

At this moment the two concealed men stepped into the room, and the surprise of the father and son was intense upon beholding them.

"You need not be astonished to see me," said Redfield, with a sinister smile, "for you know very well I was coming after you, Royal Mortimer."

"Your visit is ill-timed, sir!" exclaimed Joe, angrily.

"Quite contrarily," replied Redfield, coolly. "As you know, I am an emissary of Dom Pedro, to ascertain the location of the stolen diamonds you were just speaking of, and, in his name, I demand of you to deliver up to me the paper you have in your possession, Joseph Mortimer!"

"Upon your life, Joe," exclaimed the sick man excitedly, "give him no information. Guard that paper with your life, and do my work yourself."

"My friend," said Redfield, "you are very rash to advise such a thing, for I am determined to possess that paper if my life pays for it."

"I defy you to get it!" said Joe hotly, as he sprang to his feet. "I will do as my father bids me, and if you possess this paper, you get it only by taking it from my dead body, Alfred Redfield!"

"What!" hissed Redfield, furiously, as a dark frown settled on his brow. "You defy me, eh?"

"I defy you! We are not deceived in your intent, you rascal. Once this paper is in your possession, you would secure the treasure, and instead of returning it to its proper owner, you would appropriate it to your own use!"

"How penetrating!" sneered Redfield. "I am surprised at your astuteness, for that is just exactly what I intend to do, my noble young vindicator of dishonorably blemished characters. Give me that paper now, or, by heaven, I will not stop until you lie a corpse at my feet!"

As he said this he advanced toward Joe menacingly, but Mr. Mortimer's voice arrested him, as the invalid exclaimed:

"Juno! Run and summon assistance!"

"Move but an inch," interposed Taylor harshly, as he pointed his pistol at the colored boy, "and I will riddle your black brain with lead!"

The boy stood irresolute a moment, when there came the sound of many voices outside, the tramp of feet, accompanied by a peculiar clinking sound, and Redfield's face grew pallid as he exclaimed, holding up his hand:

"Hark! That sounds like the tramp of cavalry!"

"Saved, thank God!" exclaimed Mr. Mortimer fervently. "Joe! Joe! Captain Hawkins has arrived with his brigade. Call them! Call them in to shoot down these dogs. Ha! You cover me, do you, Alfred Redfield? I will shout——"

"Dare to utter a word, on your life!" hissed the other.

"Oh, you dastardly coward!" interposed Joe, springing toward his cousin.

"Stand!" commanded Taylor, and Joe heard the click of his pistol, and felt the cold barrel pressed against his temple.

The two men hastily glanced around and saw a huge door with a cross-bar, which evidently gave egress from the room to the front of the house.

"Help!" shouted Mr. Mortimer; but before the word was half out of his mouth his nephew sprang upon him, caught him by the throat, and strangled the half-uttered word back into the weak old man's mouth.

"Shut up, confound you!" he cried, in hoarse tones. "You want to see us hung from the branch of a tree, don't you? Give up that paper now, or——"

But, black in the face as he was from strangulation, the venerable man could not speak, much less comprehend what was said.

"Release my father, you fiend!" shouted Joe, who was perfectly wild, and he ran toward Redfield, when Taylor cried, sternly:

"Halt, or I fire!"

"Hurry! hurry!" came a voice outside, accompanied by the patter of many approaching footsteps. "They may escape!"

"Fury!" ground out the enraged Redfield from beneath his clenched teeth. "The soldiers are upon us! We are defeated! Escape, Taylor, on your life—quick—this door!"

"You shall not get away!" cried Joe, clinging to Redfield. "Help! help!"

"Let me go!" roared the other, struggling desperately to get away.

Taylor turned around to look for Juno, but the lad was gone.

Evidently he had alarmed the household while Taylor was engaged with Joe.

Mr. Mortimer lay back on the pillows gasping for breath in a painful manner, and struggling hard to retain his vitality; but, alas! those cruel hands had paralyzed his already weakened body, and he was a doomed man.

Nearer and nearer came the approaching people, and Redfield became fairly maddened with desperation as he found himself unable to tear himself free from the tenacious grip his athletic cousin held on him.

"Can I help you?" panted Taylor.

"No. Open that door as quick as you can, and shoot the first one who enters this room. As for you, Joe Mortimer—for the last time—the paper!"

"Never! I will guard it with my life!"

"Then take the consequence of your obduracy!"

He struck the youth a violent blow with the butt end of his pistol, and with a low groan Joe pitched over, insensible.

Taylor had taken the beam from the door by this time and thrown it open.

"At last!" muttered Redfield, stooping over the unconscious youth, "I shall have that diagram!" and he began feeling in Joe's pockets, when Taylor cried:

"Desist, Redfield! They are here!"

The next moment there sounded the report of his pistol and a cry of distress.

Redfield did not get the paper, and sprang from his kneeling posture just as a file of soldiers rushed into the room with Juno.

Out the door ran the two marauders, and dashing into the darkness of the trees, they fled to the lagoon. Springing into the quarter boat, they were rowed like lightning to the "Dragon." The rope of the kedge anchor was cut, the canvas was hauled apeak, and the vessel glided through the water in an incredibly short space of time, heading for the entrance.

Just as they opened up the mouth of the headland two files of soldiers came upon a rocky bluff, the polished blue barrels of their rifles gleaming in the moonlight. At their head was Captain Hawkins, and beside him stood Joe Mortimer. The moon was like an electric light, as it always is in the tropics, and the most minute object was discernible at a surprising distance. Not fifty yards separated the troops from the vessel as it cleared the jutting strip of land, and Redfield grew pale at the imminent danger threatening him. He was obliged to keep the wheel, as he dared not trust the vessel to the quartermaster, who knew nothing of the channel, and might run the "Dragon" ashore on either side by the least deviation from the proper course.

A wildly anxious look was upon his face as he saw that grim array of rifles go up to the shoulders of the soldiers. The crew observed their danger, and deserting him, ran down into the forecabin. Only Taylor remained, and soon he wisely stepped behind the trunk of the mainmast to escape the fusillade. No sooner was he ensconced when the dreaded fire came.

Redfield shut his teeth hard—his fingers instinctively took a tighter hold of the spokes of the wheel, and he nerved himself up to this trying ordeal.

The bullets hummed and whistled all around him. Taylor heard a low cry of pain emanate from his lips, saw him throw up his hands, and uttering a suppressed groan, fall back against the taffrail.

"What's the matter?" he cried, running from behind the mast.

"I am shot!" gasped Redfield faintly. "Take the wheel or we are lost!"

"How much further have we got to go before we get out of this infernal gantlet?" demanded the mate wrathily.

"A few fathoms more and we will be in deep water."

"How shall I keep her?"

"West by north-west—hold her up a little closer."

"How is that?"

"Good! Look out—the other file are aiming at us!"

"Get behind that skylight. I will run my chances here. The wheel will protect me some. If we go down we will fall into their hands."

Redfield dragged himself to a safe position, and Taylor dropped behind the wheel, which he still clutched steadily, the vessel going on, on steadily, as the canvas began to feel the fresh breeze that swept over the open sea. The front rank or file of soldiers had gone down on their knees, and the second file aimed at Taylor over their heads.

Fortunately for him, just as they fired the "Dragon" went out into the choppy inland swell that gave the bark that peculiar oscillating, heaving movement all vessels feel on the sea, and the volley went wide of its mark. Taylor breathed a sigh of intense relief and stood up. His sharp glance took in the front rank of soldiers busily reloading their weapons, and then he felt the tugging of the wind on the canvas.

A grim smile crossed his face, for the vessel was a rapid sailer, and by holding her on the present tack, with a steady hand and a sharp lookout upon his bowsprit, he saw her cleave the waves in a way that soon widened the breach between himself and the shore.

By the time the next volley came from the soldiers the vessel was so far to seaward that the shots dropped short of their mark.

Joe was aggravated at this, and turning to Captain Hawkins, he exclaimed:

"They have escaped us, after all!"

"One went down," replied the gallant captain.

"Yes, I saw Alfred Redfield fall, but he was only wounded."

"Shall we go back to the manor?"

"Ah! in the excitement I forgot my father."

"Hello! here comes some one. Who is it?"

"Juno. See how frightened he looks! I fear something has happened."

The negro boy came running up the hill at this moment, out of breath.

"Oh, Massa Joe," he panted, "sich drefful news, sah."

"What is it? What has occurred?" demanded Joe in alarm.

"De ole massa, sah—he am dead fo' shuah dis time."

Joe's face had been red with anger and excitement; it was now blanched.

"It is that demon's work!" he groaned.

"Cheer up, Joe," said Captain Hawkins. "You should have expected it."

"Ah, sir, can you realize what it is to be alone in the world?" was the mournful response, and tears came to Joe's eyes.

"Are you a man?" demanded Hawkins, appealing to his pride.

"I am an American boy," returned Joe proudly.

"Then act like one. You have a loss, but don't let it upset you."

The captain meant well, but affliction of that kind is hard to bear with fortitude, and after that, although Joe said nothing, there was a great weight and soreness about his heart.

"Who is at the house, Juno?" he asked, turning to the boy.

"Liza, sah. But a man jes' come wid a papah, sah, fo' to take de ole massa. He rid a horse, an' 'as covered wid dus'. I tole him ole massa he die, an' den he got jumpin' mad an' sweared like de Ole Boy."

"What is that?" said Joe in surprise. "A soldier to take my father?"

"Yes, sah. Dat's about de size ob it."

The captain got his men in marching order at once.

"We must return and see what this means!" he exclaimed.

They set off at once, and, reaching the house, were met by a tall, foreign-looking man, who held a paper in his hand.

"Is this Mr. Mortimer?" he asked of Joe.

"That is my name, sir," replied the youth.

"Ah, I am glad I have found you, sir. You are my prisoner!"

"Your prisoner?" echoed Joe, in surprise.

"I arrest you, at the instance of the emperor of South America, on the charge of being an accessory of your father in a diamond robbery."

"This is absurd, sir. Can you explain it?"

"I can give you my impression," replied the stranger, cordially, "and it is simply that you are taken more as a witness than anything else. Your father is a fugitive from the law, and I presume the government wish to attach your person in hopes of eliciting from you certain information as to the disposition your father made of his booty."

"Your call is very ill-timed, sir, for my father has just died."

"So I was told. This warrant was a precaution against that. If he had lived I would not be under the necessity of taking you."

"But I am no accessory of my father's, sir."

"I cannot help it. The warrant is against you."

"Who granted it?"

"The English consul."

"In that case it is void."

"Why is it void? Are you not an English subject?"

"No, sir," said Joe, emphatically. "I live on English soil, but I am an American! If you want to take me you will have to get your requisition from the American consul; so your journey has been in vain."

"I don't know about that," said the stranger, with a perplexed look. "I don't like to go away, now that I have given you warning, for you will escape me."

"You have no recourse otherwise," replied Joe, indifferently.

"The circumstances, I think, warrant me in holding you."

"It would be dangerous to do so without legal authority."

"Ha! Your tone has a threatening undercurrent in it, sir."

"You can construe it any way you choose," was the cool rejoinder.

The stranger approached Joe and placed his hand on his arm.

"I mean to hold and take you with me," he exclaimed.

"Permit me to show you your mistake, sir," interrupted Captain Hawkins.

"Ah! you interfere in his behalf?"

"Exactly. You have no authority in this case, so I advise you to make tracks, or, by thunder, I will order my men to set upon you!"

"This is infamous!" exclaimed the other in a crestfallen tone.

"Travel!" replied Hawkins, drawing out his watch. "I will give you just ten minutes to disappear over yonder hill on your horse."

The stranger slunk away, baffled.

A moment later he was mounted and away like the wind.

"Joe," said the captain, "if you take my advice you will leave this vicinity as quickly as you can, for he can return in an hour with a legal warrant for your arrest. Of course

his accusation is false, but the legal complications are best avoided."

"His charge is true," said Joe mournfully. "It is a long story, Mr. Hawkins, but, believe me, my father is, in reality, not a thief, but a victim of circumstances, as you will some day learn."

"Will you do as I ask, Joe?"

"I will take your advice. But father—the house——"

"Oh, don't you worry about that. Leave everything in my hands. The barracks are only a short distance from here, and I will attend to everything for you. Write to me and I will keep you posted. If you have any available money and valuables in the house, take what you can and lock the rest up."

They went into the house, and a sigh involuntarily burst from Hawkins' lips, for it brought old recollections back to him. During his sojourn there he had frequently ridden over to the house with his men and passed pleasant evenings with the genial host and his light-hearted son. It was for an evening's amusement that he came that night, when he was startled by the news Juno brought them of Redfield's invasion.

Joe knew that flight was best, rather than undergo a trial, and taking considerable money, and everything of value, he made out a hasty deed, transferring the house and all its effects to the captain, upon whose honor he knew he could rely. The time passed so rapidly he did not notice it, until one of the troopers suddenly rushed in and announced that half a dozen horsemen were rapidly approaching the house. Joe just had time to imprint a kiss on the cold brow of his dead father, hastily shake the hand of the kind-hearted captain, and speed away toward the lagoon. Long before the horsemen reached the house he was on his sloop with Juno, jib and mainsail were hoisted, and away rushed the beautiful vessel as swift as an arrow out on the open sea. She was a wonderful vessel for speed, and rode the ocean swell like a cork. The crew of ten men were all on deck, and while Joe was apprising them of what occurred, and told them he intended to cruise after the deep sea treasures, they saw several horsemen ride up on the rocky bluff overlooking the sea, and point out at the "Nymph" in a suggestive manner.

They were Joe's pursuers, and had arrived only just in time, with a legalized warrant for his arrest, to see him escape their clutches.

CHAPTER III.

A MYSTERIOUS CRY.

A week after the occurrence of the aforementioned events the "Nymph" was gliding through the warm waters of the Caribbean Sea, under single reefed mainsail and jib, and a darkly threatening sky around her.

Joe sat in the small but pretty cabin, at a mahogany table, upon which was spread out the map which Alfred Redfield had striven so hard to get, and at the other side of the table sat his old sailing master, Bob Ballast.

Bob was a typical sea-dog of the old school. He had on, like the rest of the crew, a natty sailor suit, that fitted his squat and square muscular body to perfection. What little there was to be seen of his face, under a grizzled beard, was weather-beaten, until it looked like jerked beef; but there was a keen, intelligent twinkle in his pale, blue eyes. He had two vices—grog and tobacco, but what sailor has not? The cabin was reserved for Joe alone. It was carpeted, at one side were two curtained berths, and scattered about were cushioned chairs and settees.

They were engrossed in conversation, when a strange, mournful sound came over the sea that startled them in-

tensely. It was a weird, unearthly sound, which could only be compared to the voice of a lost soul plunging into perdition.

"Dash me!" exclaimed Bob, springing up. "Wot's that?"

"I cannot imagine," replied Joe.

They heard a commotion on deck, and the hurried tramp of feet overhead.

Joe ran to the door and went out on deck, when Juno rushed up to him with a look of horror on his face, crying wildly:

"Oh, Massa Joe, de debbil am on de sea!"

"What was that, Tom?" quickly asked Joe of the helmsman.

"Bless me ef I know, sir," replied the man, whose teeth were chattering.

The men were all gathered in a frightened group about the mast, gazing in every direction to see if they could discover where the cry came from.

But not a thing was to be seen anywhere except the threatening sky and the troubled dark green waters. There was scarcely a breath of air, and the sails hung limply, only filling momentarily as the faintest puff touched them.

Had the wind been blowing Joe might have thought that the sound was produced by its passage through the rigging; as it was, there was no way to account for it. He had not ceased speaking when again the strange sound came over the waters. It was a pitiful, long wail, and the tones were so uncanny that it made one's flesh creep.

Joe was puzzled. Never before had he heard a similar sound, and he saw that his men, superstitious as most sailors are, were attributing it to the unearthly. Although the youth had no belief in evil spirits or anything else unnatural, he was not far from believing some inhuman agency was at work.

"It's the Flying Dutchman!" he heard one of the men exclaim.

"Then we are doomed!" supplemented another, in frightened tones.

"This is nonsense, men," interposed Joe. "There is some natural cause for it you can depend, and we will soon discover what it is."

Again came the noise, and Joe turned to the quartermaster.

"How long have you heard this?" he asked, abruptly.

"Half an hour."

"Were the tones equally as loud?"

"No, sir. At fust they was at a distance, then they got louder each minute."

"In that case, we are approaching the maker of that noise."

The sound could be distinctly heard now at almost equal intervals, only a short pause between, and although Joe swept the sea with his glass, nothing could he observe. Not even a gull was in sight, and he wondered if some coral reef was not uprearing its head from the waves near by, or if some object drifting on the water did not produce the sound. To convince himself, he sent a man aloft at the masthead with the glass to scan the surface of the water in all directions.

"It is the most puzzling and unheard-of thing I ever heard, Bob," he said to the old sailor.

"Faith," replied the other, "it worries me a good bit."

"Do you know where we are just now?"

"I'll see the log-book. I took an observation this noontime."

He went into the cabin, and after a few moments returned with the map in his hand.

"Well?" was Joe's inquiry, as he noticed a peculiar expression on Bob's face.

"Ha' ye studied this 'ere reckonin' well, sir?" he asked, pointing at the map.

"Yes, Bob; in fact, I have memorized the whole thing."

"Waal, sir, arter passin' Santa Cruz, St. Eustatius, Montserrat, Guadeloupe, Dominica, an' stoppin' at Port Royal in

Martinique island o' ther Wind'ard Islands, we laid over fur west'ard, didn't we?"

"That was the course from St. Thomas, when Redfield pursued us in the 'Dragon' after we were a day from port, Bob."

"And this yacht makes about how many miles?"

"We have averaged fifteen knots."

"What time is it now, sir?"

"Eight bells struck."

"Waal, sir, 'cordin' ter my calkerlation we must be jist now at a p'int nor' o' Los Roquez islan's, an' sou' o' Guayama, Porto Rico."

"Let me see the log-book," said Joe quickly.

Bob handed him the book, and he hastily figured out something on paper.

"You are right," he said, after a moment. "Our position now must be in latitude 14 deg. and longitude 10 deg. east from Washington. That would bring us about to a common centre of the degree, and, Bob, directly where we wish to be, for it was in this vicinity that the 'Venus' sunk five years ago."

They looked at each other in silence a moment, when that strange howling sound interrupted the current of their thoughts.

One of the men approached Joe at the same moment and saluted respectfully.

"Well, Jack," said the young captain, pleasantly, "what do you want?"

"We fellers was just a-talkin', cap," replied the sailor, "an' we ain't satisfied wi' our location one bit. That 'ere everlasting yawpin' don't mean us good, an' we thinks as we shed show it our starn as quick es we can."

"Are you afraid of a noise, Jack?"

"Tain't zackly that, sir; but ef we could understan' it, well an' good."

"Has anything hurt you yet?"

"No, sir."

"Then what are you grumbling about?"

"This 'ere wessel is doomed, sir."

"You surprise me. How did you discover it?"

"By that screechin', sir. It's a warnin'."

At this time the man at the masthead sang out:

"Sail-ho! Sail-ho!"

"Where away?" demanded Joe, uneasily.

"East by north, sir—just comin' up."

"Watch it close, and report when you make out her rig."

"Ay—ay, sir. Ah! Thar's somethin' else!"

"What is it?"

"A big thing in the water risin' and fallin' wi' ther swell."

"Can you discern what it is?"

"Not yet. If you'll let the sloop fall off a p'int we'll pass it."

"Put up your helm," said Joe to the quartermaster.

A moment later the bowsprit turned and the sheets were eased off at Joe's command.

That strange weird sound now was closer than before, and turning to the seaman, who had been taking everything in, Joe exclaimed:

"You can all set your minds at rest, for we will now see what is making the noise you became frightened at. Hello—aloft there!"

"Ay, sir—what is it?" shouted the man.

"How far off is the thing you see in the water?"

"Less than half a mile, sir."

"Can you distinguish it with the glass yet?"

There was a pause for a moment; then the man replied:

"Looks like a boat sunk to ther beam-ends."

Jack returned to his messmates, and they anxiously awaited developments.

Bob still held the chart which he had been studying intently.

"What are you thinking of?" asked Joe, rejoining him.

"Ain't you scared, too?"

"Scared?" echoed the old sailor with a short, dry laugh. "Me? No. I'm too much interested in this 'ere paper ter think o' that mournful yelpin'."

"What is it interests you?"

"I was lookin' ower ther course took by ther 'Venus,' which is marked plain here. Jist above ther Tropic o' Capricorn lies Rio Janeiro, and I see back thar is ther mines o' Geraes. Mr. Mortimer must a-gone ter Villa Rica, from thar ter Mariana, an' then struck ther coast at Espiritu Santo, whar he got his vessel. Ther course o' ther craft goes ter Parnambuco, Cape St. Roque, aroun' Fernando Noronha up ter the Lesser Antilles. He must a-passed atween Tobajo an' Grenada islan's o' ther Windward group, an' that course would fetch 'em right abouts in this werry identical spot steering west'ard."

"You are convinced we are on the track of the 'Venus?'"

"Sartin, sir—sartin," said the old sea-dog in positive tones.

The wind now began to moan through the rigging suggestively.

"Hello," muttered Joe, "the storm is coming—see how black the sky is getting."

"Alo there, sir!" called the lookout.

"Well?" asked Joe eagerly.

"The wessel a-comin' are half square-rigged—a bark."

"A bark?" echoed Joe and Bob, gazing at each other blankly.

It could be no one but their pursuer, Alfred Redfield, they were sure.

Juno had gone down in the forecastle some time previous, and when he heard the sounds so much closer he came on deck again scared half to death. The last remark of the lookout topped off his misery, and with a face almost blanched white he fell over on a coil of rope and buried his head under it like an ostrich in the Sahara will bury its head under its wing, thinking thus to escape an approaching simoon.

Dark, murky clouds had been rolling up on all sides of the lowering sky, portending one of those frightful tornadoes that spring up so rapidly and devastate everything in its path in the Caribbean Sea at that time of year. Mingled with the horrible screaming of the mysterious object which first alarmed them could be heard a moaning sound trembling over the waters and rushing through the rigging of the sloop. As bank upon bank of heavy clouds came tumbling and rolling up, throwing a gray twilight over the water, which now began to turn darker and break into chopping waves, the solitude was impressive. The monotonous washing and lapping of the water against the hull lent it a more dreary aspect—the moaning rising and falling at regular intervals with strange inflections. Then vivid streaks of lightning began to dart in and out among the distant clouds, and they heard faint rumblings of thunder that momentarily grew in volume as the lightning played quicker.

The lookout came down from the mast-head.

"We are upon it!" he cried. "Look! On the port side, sir!"

Every man was on deck, and there was a simultaneous run for the side.

"A buoy!" exclaimed Bob. "A whistling buoy!"

"Hurrah!" shouted Joe excitedly. "We have found it! Bob, Bob! It is the buoy that marks the spot where the 'Venus' went down!"

In his excitement he did not notice Juno almost under his feet, but the negro boy moved. Joe tripped as the vessel gave a lurch under a sudden gust of wind—a cry of alarm from the men, and the next moment Joe pitched headlong into the sea.

The tornado struck the sloop, the darkness fell, the waves rose, and, as the horrified men gazed back, they saw their noble young commander struggling manfully to breast the seas that washed over him. Juno had sprung in to save him.

The darkness fell; they strained their vision, and, as the sloop rushed away through the raging tempest, a blinding flash of lightning rent the dark sky, glared over the ocean an instant, and, in the momentary glimpse they had, they heard

the wailing of the buoy and saw two struggling forms clinging to it for their lives.

CHAPTER IV.

FLOTSAM AND JETSAM.

Joe Mortimer realized the peril of his position most keenly, and he became aware that Juno was beside him the moment his hand touched the buoy. The faithful young negro, instead of saving his young master's life by springing into the sea after him, only jeopardized his own existence.

They saw that the tornado was about to burst, and at once made every effort to sustain themselves against its impotent fury.

The buoy to which they clung was barrel-shaped, stood upright, and with every rise and fall of the water emitted an ear-splitting whistle that almost deafened them. There was but one hope for salvation for the two boys, and that was to reach the top of the buoy, in which a ring-bolt was riveted, to which they might secure themselves until help reached them. Unfortunately, however, there was no way to do so.

"Oh, Massa Joe," wailed Juno dolefully, "we die heah, fo' shuah."

"Nonsense," was the young captain's encouraging answer. "If we could reach the top of this huge can, we would be safe for the present."

"Lord a-massy! how we git dar?" panted Juno, clinging to an iron bolt, as his master was doing, on a line with the water, in the middle of the float, which reared ten feet above their heads. "Yo' see, sah, dis ting am all covered wid slime an' sea-grass. Den how we git up de slippery side?"

"Don't you worry, Juno, we will do it yet."

As Joe said this he glanced about at the waves and saw that they were getting higher each moment. Suddenly he let go his hold on the buoy, and swam some distance, against the wind, buffeting the mighty swell with all his strength. On this side the tide was running against the wind, which created a fiercely choppy sea. This, although frightfully exhausting to swim against, was just what he wanted.

Watching his opportunity, he turned around just as a tremendous wave came rolling toward him. It was met by the increasing wind, it broke like so much surf, and with a wild bellow the gale dashed it back toward the buoy. The brave young sailor who was in its seething clutches, was lifted high in the air on its boiling crest, and was hurled like a cannon-ball toward the buoy. The wave broke on the can with an appalling crash, and when it rolled away Joe might have been seen on top of the buoy clinging to a huge ring-bolt with all his strength.

He had been badly bruised by the experiment, but he succeeded in his design. The moment the wave passed over poor Juno's head, Joe unfastened his belt, tied one end to the ring-bolt, and let the other end fall over the edge.

"Juno!" he cried. "Are you all right?"

"Spec's I is, massa," came the sepulchral reply from below.

"I am going to suspend myself over the edge of the buoy, Juno," shouted the boy captain, "and you must climb up my body."

The next moment he swung his agile body over, and when he reached the end of the belt he felt his lowly friend grasp his ankles and heavily drag himself up. It took but a moment for Juno to reach the top, when Joe quickly followed him. They were safe now for a time, for only few of the waves broke over the buoy as it rose up and rode over the others like a cork.

There were, however, some mountainous rollers that came toward them with the roar of thunder, and they were deluged in their midst.

It was then that they were forced to hold on with every bit of strength lest they wash them over into the water again. Everything had grown as black as ink—thunder was crashing in the heavens like volleys of heavy ordnance, and the flying black clouds were riven by flash upon flash of vivid lightning tongues, whose glaring flame alone displayed the raging of the waves and the torrents of rain that beat down upon them with the howling of the furious gale.

Several times they were nearly swept from their tiny safeguard. But luckily the buoy was safely anchored with a hundred fathoms of heavy chain cable, giving it plenty of swing and safely securing it.

Several hours passed that seemed like so many years, when suddenly by the flash of a tongue of forked lightning they saw a vessel driving toward them under a small storm fore-sail, with a balance-reefed spanker aft.

At first Joe thought it was the "Dragon," but a second view showed him that it was a three-masted brig, and while he was looking at it he saw the mizzen-mast go by the board, carrying the fore-mast with it, then several boats were lowered, filled with men, and rowed away.

The vessel was then almost a wreck, he knew, and although he wished fervently to cry out for help, he knew that it would do no good, as the noise made by the warring elements would completely drown his voice.

The vessel, he saw by the almost incessant lightning, was plunging directly toward him, and he quickly called Juno's attention to it.

There was no controlling the ill-fated vessel now; indeed, he saw no one left on the deck. In a few moments it was rolling, pitching and tossing close by where the two boys were clinging for their lives.

"Juno!" fairly shouted Joe, in order to make himself heard, "that ship is our only chance for life! Any moment a wave may wash us from our hold here, for we are not strong enough to withstand many more breaking over us."

"Wha' yo' kin do?" gasped the negro boy helplessly.

As he uttered this blank query a man appeared on the deck.

"Aho!" shouted Joe, wildly. "Ship aho!"

The man saw them, and echoed Joe's cry.

"Catch this line!" they faintly heard him shout, and a moment later the vessel was close to them, and a rope whizzed over their heads, which they deftly caught and fastened to the buoy. The other end was fastened to the wreck, and they were not slow to make their way over the life-line to the vessel, although every wave that rolled near engulfed them.

The man was a sailor, and he had the end of the rope in his hand as they joined him. Their relief was intense to find a vessel's plank once more beneath their feet, although it was only a dismantled wreck.

"Lord!" ejaculated the surprised sailor, "how came you there?"

Joe told him briefly, and then asked:

"Where is the rest of your crew? Is any one left but you?"

"Gone!" replied the man sadly, "Left in the boats when the masts went over."

"And you?" queried Joe.

"Me? Oh, I'm second mate—the only one but the two passengers left."

"Two passengers? Is this a passenger vessel?"

"No—freighter from Cuba to Nassau. She's called the 'Restless.'"

"You don't say. And your passengers?"

"A young girl and her old maid teacher. They are down in the cabin."

"What is the girl's name?"

"Lucy Travers—"

"What!" shouted Joe excitedly, "Lucy Travers?"

"Yes. You seem surprised. She's the daughter of the English consul at Havana."

"She's an old friend of mine," said Joe, who was greatly astonished.

He waited to hear no more, but making his way to the cabin door, he entered.

There were two swinging-lamps illuminating the interior, and by their faint light he saw a lovely girl lying on a sofa, with a tall, angular-looking lady with an acrimonious visage bending over her as she knelt by her side.

"Lucy!" cried Joe, as he approached her.

The two ladies were startled, and the girl sprang to her feet.

"Why—gracious—heavens—Matilda, are we dreaming?" she gasped in wild surprise, as she clutched the ancient lady's arm, "or is this really Joe Mortimer?"

"Land sakes alive, if it isn't him!" cried the other.

A few words relieved them and explained all.

"Well," said the girl despondently, "we meet under strange and fatal auspices, Joe, but I prefer this to dying alone. Not that I wish you to share my fate, but when our parents separated us death had no terrors for me."

"Yes," said Joe bitterly, "they cared nothing for the love we bore each other."

He had seated himself beside her now and took her little hand in his own, while Matilda Brown discreetly drew aside.

"Do you know that I always believed that Alfred Redfield had something to do with our separation?" said the girl, earnestly. "He was my father's clerk before he went to South America, and professed to love me. You know how I detested and spurned him. Well, he averred that he would avenge himself for it."

"You are right," said Joe, "but I have no doubt his machinations effected our separation. He stirred up the patriotism in your father and in mine by drawing a line at our nationality. Oh, he was a wily wretch! But how did you get here?"

"Father died a month ago, and left me alone with only Matilda for my protection. I then determined to go to Nassau to live on my father's estate there; and as the captain of this vessel was a fast friend of papa's, and I preferred a sailing vessel to a steamer, I took passage with Matilda."

"And the captain deserted you out—away?" demanded Joe, furiously.

"He is dead," interrupted the girl, "One of the masts, in falling, killed him."

"Ah, that alters it."

At this moment Juno and the sailor entered.

"There," said the girl, "comes a staunch friend, the second mate of this craft. He was sick. I nursed him, and he has shown his gratitude by remaining with us when the rest of the panic-stricken crew took to the boats, deserting us after the masts went over. But they must have perished in this frightful sea."

"Well," said Joe to Murdock, "what is the prospect?"

"None," was the laconic rejoinder. "We are anchored to the buoy."

"What?" ejaculated Joe, in surprise.

"Ay, this boy and I just secured another hawser to the first one, lengthening it out fifty fathoms, and here we are as safe as you like, unless the waves mash the ship to pieces, and that is not very likely, as I can vouch for every timber in the old craft," said the second mate.

CHAPTER V.

A HARD STRUGGLE.

The next morning dawned bright and clear, when the five castaways, who stood on the deck, descried a sail approaching, and when it drew near they met with a dismaying surprise, for the vessel proved to be the "Dragon!"

"What shall we do?" asked Lucy in tones of alarm, turning to her lover.

"Redfield will not dare to harm you," said Joe, reassuringly. He did not feel so safe himself, however.

"There," said Murdock. "He's coming up into the wind and lowering a boat."

Neither Matilda nor Juno ventured to speak.

A boat had gone down on the davits, occupied by four sailors and another person who sat in the stern sheets, whom Joe had no doubt was Redfield, and was pulled toward the wrecked brig. The heavy seas had subsided now, and only an undulating swell disturbed its bosom, upon which the quarter-boat mounted and rode over, as the four stout ash-blades were lustily pulled by the uniformed sailors.

In a few moments the boat was alongside, and Redfield came on deck.

"Mortimer!" he cried, in tones of unfeigned astonishment, upon seeing Joe, and his swarthy visage grew darker with rage.

"Ay, rascal," replied the youth. "You need not be surprised, you villain!"

"And Lucy Travers!" continued the other.

At this moment his four sailors came upon deck.

"Seize those people!" exclaimed Redfield.

"Joe!" shrieked Lucy in terror, as she clung to his arm.

"Stand back!" cried the youth to the sailors. "Attack us at your peril!"

The sailors ran toward them, however, when Joe picked up a belaying pin, and the first mate and Juno followed his example.

The moment they reached the others Joe dealt the foremost a stunning blow that laid him senseless on the deck, and the three others drew back.

"Drive them off the ship!" cried Murdock.

There was incitement enough, for they attacked the sailors, who turned and fled over the sides toward their boat. Redfield remained on the deck.

His face was as black as a thundercloud with rage.

"Hold on, there!" he roared, as he drew a revolver from his pocket, cocked it, and aimed it at the others. "The first one of you who moves will die!"

"We shall see!" panted Joe, springing toward him.

"Stop!" shouted Redfield, "or I'll drop you!"

"I have no fear of you or your weapon," cried Joe, undauntedly.

"Your death be upon your own head, then!" shouted Redfield.

"Take my life! Slayer of my father, you cannot harm me!"

Redfield raised his weapon and fired point-blank at the intrepid youth's head, but Joe was as quick as lightning, and dropped the moment he saw his enemy's finger press the trigger. The bullet flew over his head, and before Redfield could raise the hammer for a second shot Joe was upon him. One blow knocked the weapon from Redfield's hands, and the next moment they grappled. A frightful conflict ensued.

Joe was as sinewy and muscular as a well-trained athlete, and although small in comparison with his opponent, Redfield found in him his match. They were close to an open gangway just then, and their fierce struggles carried them unconsciously to the edge of the opening.

The consequence was that when Juno ran to Joe's assistance the two struggling men toppled over and fell down into the sea.

Their fall broke their clench, but when they arose to the surface again they swam toward each other to resume the struggle. At the same moment the sailors in the boat saw Joe, and while two of them rowed toward him, the other two sprang up into the bow with an oar in his hand, and the youth, captain, Juno, and the negro boy were down on the deck.

sprang into the water to go to his master's assistance, while Murdock ran toward the open gangway and sprang in with a knife in his hand. The two ladies, alarmed at the fracas, helplessly remained on the deck, weeping with terror and wringing their hands. Their position was bad enough before, but now it was worse.

While the boat was approaching Joe reached his enemy.

Each had but one hand with which to continue the combat, as it was necessary to sustain themselves with the other. The moment they came together Redfield with an upward movement of his body lurched himself half out of the water and dove down. Before Joe could move away or gain his respiration his enemy had him by the heels, and dragged him down beneath the waves. Beneath the water he doubled up, opened his eyes and saw the dim form of his enemy. The next instant up shot Redfield and grasped him by the throat like a visé. Joe was as quick as he was. He reached out and caught Redfield similarly. They both arose to the surface struggling hard to overpower each other, when the boat glided up to them. Juno was swimming in the water behind it, unseen as yet by the boat's crew, and when Joe's head came above the surface of the water the man in the bow raised his oar to deal the youth a blow.

Murdock was a short distance off, his knife between his teeth, swimming toward them. At this critical juncture, just as the fatal oar was descending, Juno seized the gunwale of the boat and put his whole weight upon it so suddenly that the man in the bow fell over sidewise and the boat was capsized, spilling its inmates into the water.

One of the sailors was badly cut by the sudden upsetting of the boat, and his blood began to dye the water crimson. This proved to be the most fatal event that could have happened. The sailors were yelling like pirates, when they heard the derisive "Yah, yah, yah!" of the grinning, delighted ducky, and they strove to right the boat.

Juno was in his element in the water, and to exasperate his enemies, when they got on one side of the boat to right it, he swam to the other side and resisted them by persistently turning it the other way.

Thus he kept two of them engaged, and when they swam after him he would dive and elude them with the slipperiness of an eel. Meantime, the other sailor went to the assistance of his captain, armed with a dirk, and Joe found himself attacked on both sides. Murdock soon reached his side, however, and at once attacked the armed sailor, driving him away.

A frightful yell of agony at this juncture pealed across the water, and with one accord they all looked over toward the two sailors whom Juno was engaging. A fearful sight met their gaze. It was the dorsal fin of a shark! The bleeding wounds of the injured sailor had attracted the ocean cannibal to the spot, and it had seized the sailor in its maw and bit him half in two, when he uttered the cry which startled them.

In the meantime Redfield's first mate, Taylor, had observed an unusual commotion in the water, and apprehending that some catastrophe had befallen his captain, he ordered another quarter boat down, manned, and he entered it himself, and was rowed rapidly toward the scene of conflict.

As soon as Redfield saw what happened to his sailor, he suddenly swam toward the overturned boat, upon which he clambered. Juno had already taken up a straddling position there, as he saw what occurred to the sailor.

An instant after Redfield was safe, several more razor-like fins appeared on the surface, moving hither and thither with quick, nervous motions, then suddenly they all darted toward the shrieking sailor, whose companion was making all haste toward the boat.

They heard an awful shriek of wild despair as the horde of ravenous sharks closed in on the poor wretch, and a dozen turned upon their backs, as is customary with these demons of the deep, and darted at him with open mouths. It seemed as if every one caught him, for the next moment his body disappeared forever beneath the sea! Joe and Murdock swam for the wreck of the "Restless," while the two other sailors made haste toward the upturned boat, upon which sat Redfield and Juno. The moment the sailors got on the boat they seized the hapless little negro bodily and flung him into the very midst of the school of sharks! But, scared as the boy was, he knew that they rarely attacked anything in motion; and with this knowledge he at once began to work his hands

and feet, and in a few moments he was swimming like a fish, and the sharks were driven off.

The two other sailors, seeing this, were not long in following him, and the boat was soon again in the water.

when the huge body of a shark shot across the spot he had evacuated.

Murdock saw the monster, and as it turned he grasped the dirk in his hand and dove under it. Coming up beneath the broad, white belly of the leviathan, he drove the knife upward again and again, stabbing it to the vitals, and dyeing the surrounding water with its blood.

Calling Joe to leave that spot as soon as possible, they both quickly made their way to the martingale shrouds of the wreck, up which they clambered, leaving the shark in the throes of death, and all of its companions tearing off its flesh before it expired.

The moment they reached the deck they heard the ladies shrieking wildly for help.

One look showed them the cause of their terror.

Redfield and Taylor had seized them, and their sailors were clambering up on the deck over the taffrail.

A groan of anguish burst from Joe.

Maddened at the brutality of the wretches, heedless of the danger he was incurring, seeing only in his frenzied glance that the girl he loved was in peril, and, reckless of the consequence, he rushed like a madman to their assistance.

Just then Juno reached the deck and joined Murdock; a moment later and both were flying after Joe. The two wretches had knocked the women down, and bound them hand and foot, when Joe reached their midst.

Too late to help them—indeed powerless to do so—he found himself encircled by half a dozen revolvers, every one at full cock and aimed directly at his heart!

A groan of consternation escaped him, and he crouched back, panting hard with excitement, when Redfield approached him and said, with an evil sneer:

"At last, Joe Mortimer, not only are you my prisoner, but I also possess the girl I love!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE TREASURE.

Joe was furious at Redfield's taunt, and sprang toward the sneering wretch, but several of the sailors seized him before he could resist, and made him a prisoner. Juno and Mr. Murdock soon shared his fate.

"You see," said Redfield, when the three men were rendered powerless, "your resistance was perfectly futile. I would be justified to throw you overboard, but, as I have other views regarding you, I will not give away to my anger, and spoiling my chances of attaining my point with you. And now—the diagram! I know where you keep it."

He thrust his hand in Joe's pocket, and drew the paper out with a smile of grim satisfaction. The young captain was provoked beyond all measure.

The ignominious treatment Lucy Travers and her tutor received at the hands of this scoundrel made his blood boil, and his anger was augmented by Redfield gaining possession of the much coveted diagram, which plainly showed the location of the deep sea treasure. But, helpless as he was, there was no use of venting his embittered emotions in ranting. He knew that Redfield would only laugh at such a procedure, and thought that the best way to do was to retain a cool exterior. It did not take his cousin long to comprehend that the treasure was in their immediate vicinity.

"Ay," he said, "I understand it now, Taylor. The buoy to which this wreck is anchored is the very one marking the spot where the 'Venus' foundered. We are in luck, my lad, and no mistake."

"More so," said Taylor, "as this wreck is here, for we can utilize it in hoisting the schooner, if needs be, although, after lying five years below this surface, in the midst of powerful tides which cross each other, and perhaps sunk beneath a world of submarine vegetation or sands, we may be forced to use the diving-bells which you provided when we were fitting out."

"In a word," said Redfield, "we will commence the search at once. As for the prisoners, let them be taken on board the 'Dragon,' and place the ladies in my cabin; the men must go into the hold."

His orders were obeyed, and all that day was a busy one with Redfield.

The "Dragon" was sailed along side the "Venus," and both were hauled close to the buoy. Divers went down, and when they came to the surface it was with the news that the wreck of the "Venus" lay in the midst of a coral reef, not twenty fathoms below the surface. It was impossible to raise her, as she was wedged fast. The buoy anchor was caught in the

coral as securely as if grown there. Then Redfield donned a diver's suit and was lowered.

He found the wreck in perfect condition, but covered with huge barnacles and fungus. In fact the schooner looked like some huge ocean plant.

Redfield was accompanied by his mate, and motioned Taylor to follow him.

They were armed with axes, and proceeding to the cabin door, they found it locked.

It was an easy matter to burst it open; then they entered.

There is but an imperfect light at best beneath the water; but the interior of the cabin was darker than it was on deck, and they had the utmost difficulty discerning objects. Groping about, Redfield suddenly stumbled over something, and bending over he beheld a colossal skeleton wedged in between the half-opened door of a locker. He remembered that when the shell from the Brazilian ship, in which were the pursuers of Royal Mortimer, struck the "Venus" below the water-line and she sunk, no one was on board of her but Pablo Hernandez, the huge negro.

Consequently this must be his skeleton. Redfield was trembling with excitement as this thought occurred to him. He remembered that when Mortimer sprang overboard and swam to the Isthmus of Panama vessel, he had a package strapped to his back. Now the question agitating him was: Did Royal Mortimer have many of the stolen diamonds in his possession, or was all the treasure really in the schooner? Why had Pablo gone down in the vessel when he had as much chance to escape as Mortimer had? Redfield suspected that the negro went to the cabin to secure the diamonds, and while getting them was carried down with the ship. To convince himself of the real truth he essayed to open the door of the locker and search the interior. To his surprise, however, he found it immovable.

It took but a moment to learn the reason.

A huge plank had been driven in where the shell of the Brazilian gun struck the vessel. The negro was in the doorway of the locker at the time, and the shell drove the plank over in such a position that it struck the door, thus catching Pablo in the jam, holding him fast and helpless, and thus, unable to extricate himself, he had been carried down and drowned. The plank yet was pressing against the door, and Redfield was obliged to use his ax to remove it. The moment he did so a cry of delight and surprise escaped him at what he saw.

Clutched in the hands of the bony skeleton was a small box.

In a moment Redfield seized it, lifted the lid, and saw that the contents of the box were the missing diamonds. They were of immense size and represented fabulous wealth. The emotions of the rascal were beyond description. He clutched the precious casket close to his bosom, and paying no heed to Taylor, walked toward the door of the cabin.

Upon the threshold he met his mate. Taylor had his ax in his hand, and touching Redfield upon the arm, pointed significantly at the box.

Redfield's fingers convulsively closed tighter on his treasure, and he hastily moved away. Taylor followed him. Redfield was nervous and apprehensive.

When he reached the deck Taylor was beside him, and clutched his arm.

He looked through the glass visor of the first mate's helmet of copper, and saw that his eyes were ablaze with cupidity. That look made the wretch shudder. He saw in an instant that he was in danger.

Taylor raised the cover of the box and peered at its contents.

The next moment Taylor drew back one step, raised his ax with both hands, and aimed a frightful blow at Redfield's head!

Down came the ax, but Redfield had time to dart aside before it could do him the injury intended.

The murderous design of his first mate was apparent, and Redfield was groaning with horror within his rubber suit. He jerked the line, signaling those above to haul him up, but Taylor was too quick for him. Drawing his cut-throat knife from its sheath in his belt, and with one dash he severed the rope which was used to raise his captain above the water.

Redfield was horrified. He dropped the box, drew his own knife, and glided toward his mate.

Taylor was already gone—well hidden.

It was a thrilling position. They were on equal terms, for their movements were equally retarded by the pressure of the water.

Taylor maliciously intended to kill him and possess himself of the box of diamonds. There was no distance between them.

As Redfield started his legs began to move and he moved. At the same instant the men above, having hauled up the

line and finding it severed, seized the rubber air-tube and the guide-line and suddenly began to haul Redfield up.

This was so suddenly done that just as Taylor sprang toward him with his knife upraised he was lifted up over his head, and the stab which Taylor made at him missed its mark.

As Redfield was raised he came in contact with the air-tube attached to Taylor's helmet. A cry of wicked exultation burst from his lips, and he slashed his knife across the tube, severing it in two!

He saw the guide-line which Taylor carried wildly jerked, and knew that he was strangling to death for want of air, as the water must then be rushing into the severed tube!

An instant later he reached the surface, and they hastily unfastened his suit.

While this was in operation Taylor was drawn up.

The consternation of the sailors at the spectacle presented to them was extreme.

When they finally exposed Taylor to view he was dead! Black in the face, his eyes starting, his lips bursting, and blood spurting from his ears, nose, eyes and mouth, he was a ghastly sight.

"Good heavens!" cried the second mate. "How did this happen?"

"Never mind," replied Redfield, shuddering. "Drop him into the sea."

"Was it an accident, sir?" persisted the man.

"No! I did it! Let that suffice! He tried to take my life."

"Did you find the treasure, sir?"

"Yes. Fasten on my suit again, and attach another life-line."

"Are you going down again, sir?"

"I must. The treasure is lying on the deck of the 'Venus.'"

They secured him well this time, and adjusting the leaden weights to his feet, he went down like a shot. When he reached the deck again he found the treasure box intact. Again securing it, he cast off the leaden soles, gave the signal, and was hoisted upon his vessel again.

When he was divested of his diving suit, he proceeded to his cabin with the second mate, and locked the treasure in a safe. The two women were in there, weeping bitterly at their cruel adversity of fate, and he was about to speak to them, when he heard one of the men on deck suddenly cry:

"Sail-ho! Sail-ho!"

"Where is it? What is it?" he cried, running out nervously.

"A sloop, sir," replied the man. "East'ard."

He held a good binocular in his hand, and directing it at the tiny speck observable on the horizon, he took a good view.

"By the shades of darkness!" he exclaimed presently. "It is the 'Nymph!'"

"What will we do about it?" queried the second mate.

"Fly!" he exclaimed. "What is the use of incurring further risk? We have got what we want now, so set fire to that wreck, drive a hole in the buoy to sink it, and get up sail!"

His orders were carried out with alacrity, and when the "Dragon" spread out her white wings to the brisk wind the buoy was beneath the waves and a huge conflagration was all that was left to show that the "Restless" once existed.

CHAPTER VII.

CONFUSION.

The cabin of the Dragon was occupied by the two ladies when Redfield entered it and at once demanded of Lucy to consent to marry him when they reached port.

"I would sooner die!" exclaimed the girl.

"Bosh!" he replied disdainfully. "Talk is cheap."

"You will discover that I mean what I say."

"We shall see," he replied with a significant look.

Calling his first mate, he whispered earnestly with him, at the conclusion of which the mate went out; but he soon returned with a bible in his hand and locked the cabin door after him.

"What do you mean by this indignity?" demanded Lucy.

"My first mate is going to marry us," was the calm reply.

"Never!" resolutely cried the frightened girl. "Such a wedding would be illegal in the eyes of God and man!"

"Oh, no," smiled the rascal. "A wedding ceremony properly performed and witnessed would hold good in any court."

"But I do not sanction it!"

"That makes no difference. Come, Springer, get ready."

The girl's face was very pale. She drew a dagger from the bosom of her dress and placed the point at her heart.

"If you do not instantly leave this cabin," she exclaimed in tones which convinced him of her unwavering resolution, "I

will plunge this blade into my heart! I told you I would die before marrying you, and I will keep my word!"

"By all that is holy," he exclaimed, "the girl is possessed! Drop that knife, you vixen!"

"Will you leave me in peace?"

"For the present, yes. I do not want you to kill yourself. But remember," he added, impressively, "the time will come when you cannot thus defy me, and then—you will be mine at any cost!"

With a malignant scowl on his swarthy face he beckoned to Springer to follow him, and they went out—baffled.

"And I," said the nearly fainting girl, as she seized a pistol from Redfield's case, which stood on a table, and hid it in her pocket, "will always be ready for you!"

And the girl did not have long to wait when she had an opportunity of testing her assertion.

Dom Pedro II, was a wise man. He realized that the main wealth of his empire was in its minerals, and he governed this branch well up to the date of his fifty-fifth year. Therefore, when Royal Mortimer was denounced, after his supposed theft, no efforts were spared to find him.

The mistaken estimate of Alfred Redfield's honor was not reprehensible, as the man, upon leaving the English Consul at Havana, had produced ample recommendations to find a similar position in the office of the English consul at Rio de Janeiro, in which office he became conversant with the details of the great diamond robbery. On the night succeeding that upon which he had gained possession of the diamonds Redfield went out on the deck from his cabin in anything but an amiable mood after he had been pressing his importunities upon Lucy Travers to marry him, but met with a cold, haughty reception which convinced him that the girl would die sooner than submit to his wish. It was a dark night, and the course of the vessel was southeast, for the Nymph had been pursuing him a whole day, gaining steadily, and showing a persistence which Redfield knew meant a lurking danger, the effect of which he had no cognizance. He did not know whether his men would stand by him in a fight if it came to close work, as they had not shipped under those terms; therefore he chose the alternative of out-sailing the sloop, and escaping. But at the time of his last view of the sloop this seemed to be a vain endeavor.

The second mate was on the deck, and had been promoted to Taylor's place.

"How is she going, Springer?" he asked, nervously.

"Ten knots, sir," replied the officer.

"Slow—very slow," he grumbled. "I'm afraid the sloop will catch us."

"Can't we show fight?"

"We have nothing but muskets. He may have guns."

"But we have the prisoners, whose lives we can threaten."

"Hard apart!" suddenly shouted a distant voice.

"Hello!" ejaculated Redfield. "What is that—the quarter-master?"

"Ay!" exclaimed Silas Springer, in startled tones. "We are veering off!"

"Port! Port!" cried the voice again, excitedly. "Quick, or we'll be stove in."

"Look!" cried Redfield. "Good Heaven, it appears like a veritable ghost."

He pointed toward the stern as he spoke.

The thick darkness seemed to have parted, and through the black veil there burst upon their startled gaze a vision of white that made them think it was a phantom. It was a sloop, whose single spar was bent beneath a cloud of pure white duck, which came bearing down upon them like a race-horse.

"The Nymph!" cried Springer.

At that moment there came a shriek from the after part of the "Dragon's" deck which sent a cold shiver through Redfield.

"Let me go!" cried a voice, in wild accents.

"Down with them!" was the fierce response.

"The prisoners!" shouted Redfield. "They escape! Ho, forward there! Every man of the watch this way! Quick! Quick, upon your lives!"

Then came the sound of a heavy fall as the helmsman fell to the deck; then the hurried patter of many feet, and as Redfield, wild and furious, turned to run, a lithe form darted out from behind the mainmast and struck him a violent blow which made him stagger.

"Down with the rascals!" came the voice of Joe.

"Help, help!" cried Redfield. "A thousand furies seize you!"

The watch were running aft when there came the glaring flash and roar of a gun on the deck of the Nymph, and a ball came shrieking across the water. It struck the weather bulwarks, smashed them to atoms abaft of the galley, and crossed

the deck, striking the master of the watch, who dropped like a corpse.

The rest pressed on toward Joe and Juno, however—a dozen men, whose rage was roused until they might annihilate the two boys.

Joe had come from the cabin and the two girls were just emerging when Murdock ran to liberate them.

Two of the sailors fell upon him, however, and, despite his furious resistance, he was stricken a frightful blow with a marline-spike, which stretched him senseless and bleeding on the deck.

"The treasure!" roared Redfield in awful tones, as he saw a box in the hands of Joe. "May the demon seize you! Give it up."

"Never!" cried the boy captain, triumphantly. "It shall not leave my possession, Alfred Redfield. What! Stand back."

"Fire upon that dog," cried Redfield, furiously. "He must not escape."

The men drew their weapons, but Joe was too quick for them. He sprang upon the bulwarks beside a lantern, and cried thrillingly:

"The moment you attempt to fire I will hurl this box into the sea."

Redfield's consternation knew no bounds. He frothed at the mouth with rage, and a wild look of horror settled melancholily in his dark eyes.

"For God's sake come down!" he cried in anguished tones.

"Do not carry out your threat, Mortimer. Oh, why did I leave my safe unlocked? What shall I do? Oh, what shall I do?"

"Ahoy there!" roared a voice at this moment, coming from the deck of the Nymph. "Haul to on your lives, or by the horned sea-serpent I'll blow yer to kingdom come afore yer know it."

It was the voice of Bob Ballast, Joe knew at once.

"Up with your helm," shouted the alarmed Redfield to the man who had taken the quartermaster's position.

The bark came up into the wind the next moment, and Redfield was just whispering to one of his men to steal out on the cathead behind Joe and knock him on the head, when the youth cried:

"Bob, run up on the starboard side. Quick!"

Divining his purpose, but too late to prevent it, Redfield saw the sloop rush alongside of his now almost stationary bark, and Joe reach out for the shrouds which were nearing him like a flash.

"Hold!" he cried, aiming his pistol at Joe as his rage again gained the supremacy at the idea of the youth escaping him with the treasure.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Joe, disdainfully. "Blaze away, but I will keep it, my noble cousin—I will keep it!"

"My curse upon you—die!" he cried, malignantly.

His finger was upon the trigger, but before he could press it an iron belaying-pin, which Juno held, went flying through the air and struck him a heavy blow on the side of his head that made him see many constellations of stars. His weapon was discharged by the shock, but the bullet struck his own mainmast. The next moment the sailors rushed toward the two boys, when Juno snatched the box from Joe's hand, sprang upon the rail and took a flying leap through the air. The next moment Joe had hold of the shrouds of his own noble little craft, and was swept along, until the sloop disappeared again into the darkness.

Murdock had regained consciousness when Redfield's glance fell upon him.

"A rope!" he roared, in the height of his fury. "Hang that man!"

"Captain," interposed Springer, "would that be advisable?"

"Shut up, confound you! I command this craft!"

"But the law—if this is discovered"

"Ten thousand curses upon them!" was the fierce reply. "From the yard-arm!"

"Are you determined to hang him?"

"Ay! hang him like a dog."

They were forced to obey him, although they wished to demur.

A block and tackle was rigged from the yard-arm.

Two sailors held Murdock, whose face was very pale.

"You will suffer for this," he said. "I am not afraid to die, but I do not deserve it for trying to escape from your clutches."

"You had no right to make a prisoner of me in the first place."

"Up with him!" shouted the maddened wretch. "You dictate to me? No justice? I have authority—I am the emperor's agent!"

"I see it is useless to talk to you," said Murdock, dryly.

"All your talk cannot alter my resolve!" hissed the furious wretch.

They placed a running noose about Murdock's neck, and se-

eral of the sailors seized the other end of the line, preparatory to swinging the brave fellow into eternity, when there sounded a wild shriek that pierced every one with its tones of intense horror, and the next moment Lucy rushed from the cabin up to the throng.

"Oh," she cried, "release this man, in pity's name!"

"Haul him up!" reiterated Redfield, remorselessly.

"What," she cried, turning upon him. "You order this? But I might have known it. Ah! you inhuman fiend, have you no pity—no heart?"

"He must die!" exclaimed the rascal, sulkily.

"Never will he die in this manner!"

"Perhaps you will prevent it?" he sneered.

"Ay, sir! I will prevent it!"

"Men, haul that scoundrel up!"

"Merciful Heaven—do you call yourselves men to consummate this atrocity?"

"Why don't you do as I say?" roared Redfield, in exasperation, as his men fluctuated with sheepish-looking faces.

"They are not such pitiful cowards as you are!" cried the girl.

"Take this girl away!" shouted Redfield. "Take her away! Lock her up in the cabin, you infernal lubbers, and I will hang him myself."

The men dropped the rope and Redfield seized it in his own hands, fully bent upon carrying out his villainous design.

"Let go that rope!" cried the girl.

"Not until this man is hung!" he fairly hissed, so vindictive was he.

"Then I shall make you!" she cried, and with one move of her arm she covered him with one of his own revolvers. "Let him go!" she cried, ringingly, "or, as true as there is a Heaven above us, Alfred Redfield, I will shoot you with this pistol!"

CHAPTER VIII.

A PARTING THREAT.

When Joe reached the deck of the Nymph he found Juno calmly sitting on the box of diamonds, on the deck, with all the sailors surrounding him.

"Safe!" he cried. "Oh, Bob, such a time!"

"Lord bless 'e, sir," cried the old sailor, "I'm right glad to see yer again."

"And the jewels, Juno?"

"Dey am safe, sah, I specs!"

"Good. And how came you to pursue that vessel, Bob?"

"Sure, sir, when we seed as yer went over an' we wuz druv far away wi' the gale, an' come back an' seed as the Dragon war nigh to ther buoy an' youse nowhere to be seed, wot could I think but as you'd a-been took by ther inemy, so that's how I follied 'em."

"And you arrived just in time to save us, Bob. Still, there's Lucy Travers on board with her tutor, and a brave officer, Bob, and all of them in Alfred Redfield's power. Heaven only knows what may happen to them, unless they are speedily rescued."

"Can't we go arter 'em now, sir?"

"Can you see their lights yet?"

"Ay, ay, sir, but soon, ef we don't get in thar wake, they'll disappear."

"Then head for him, Bob, and we'll see if our two guns are not of some avail! Juno—take the box into the cabin."

The negro boy had detailed their adventures to the men, so he left them discussing the subject, and taking up the box, he went inside.

Joe ordered all the lights on deck extinguished, so that the enemy might not be apprised of their approach, and giving a few instructions to Bob Ballast, he went into the cozy little cabin after his servant.

The door was closed and the curtains at the windows drawn so that the light from the lamp could not be seen. The negro boy had placed the box on the table, and Joe at once opened it, and took a view of the treasure which had occasioned all his vicissitudes.

"Magnificent!" he could not help exclaiming, as he picked up a large piece of ferruginous clay in which was a dull, hexahedral prism resembling a piece of glass. "Nearly as big as the Regent! Such a gem as it will make!"

"An' yo' fader he get dat, sah, from de mines?"

"Pablo did it. How he escaped the surveyor is more than I know. This surveyor, you know, must hand over the found diamonds to the superintendent, who counts, weighs and records them until, as he is twice a week required, he delivers them to the government at the nearest town, which in turn delivers them to the city of Rio Janeiro yearly. I am also

puzzled at the manner in which they escaped the sentries who are constantly posted all about the district, allowing no one to pass without permission from the general superintendent who has his headquarters at St. Antonio de Tejuco, forty leagues from Villa Rica, the seat of the Junta Diamantina, which consists, besides, of a confiskal, two cashiers, an inspector general and another clerk. You see there are ten superintendents, and to encourage the thousands of negroes they controlled they awarded them presents according to the price of the diamond they found. If, for example, a negro found a diamond weighing 17 carats and two grains or its approximate, he got his liberty from slavery."

"Spôsê dey catch a tief?" asked Juno.

"He is sent to Angola for ten years in prison. Now see these stones, ain't they beauties? Parallelopiped, octohedron, tetrahedron, rhombiedodecabedron, and triangular-faced dodecabedrons—every shape, size and kind. Isn't it a pity that in cutting they must diminish half their rough size? Not one has a black, yellow or gray color, which would indicate in a rough diamond a poor quality, but all have a green or a red tinge—and all from the Serro de St. Antonio! I do not believe that the gold cradles of Aboite, Andaja de Sanens or Da Prata rivers ever panned anything like them. Poor father! That they should ruin him so! If all this quartzose chlorite oxide of iron, gold platina and talcose schist was the pure carbon, this box would be worth fifty million dollars!"

"What yo' do wid it now, sah?" queried Juno.

"Hide it until we get to Rio."

"Yo' gib it to de king?" asked Juno, in surprise.

"Of course. I have a sacred trust—my father's vindication at stake."

"Lor! ain't yo' honest, sah!" said Juno, in admiring surprise.

"Open the secret locker in the bulkhead, Juno."

The boy pressed the spring, and a small panel in the wall slid open.

It was a skillfully concealed aperture, and into it the young captain placed the precious box, and then reclosed the door.

No sooner was this done when there came a knock at the cabin door.

Upon opening it he found Jack Topstay outside.

"Well, what is up now?" he queried.

"The bark is only half a mile to so'th'ard, sir."

"Let me see; it is nearly daylight, isn't it?"

"Day's a-breakin', sir, an'll soon be here."

"Then follow the bark until it dawns, and then we will attack them."

"But, sir, beg pardin, I see as they're up ter some mischief."

"Eh? What are they doing?"

"Hangin' a man, sir."

"What man?"

He spoke quickly, nervously, and as Juno handed him his pistol he rushed out on deck, and away to the gunnys' decks.

"Good Heaven!" he cried in consternation, "you are right, Jack. They have prepared to land Murdock! He! There stands Lucy with a pistol in her hand, threatening the life of Redfield. Oh! this is frightful. Away! After them with all speed, Bob! Sail as close to the wind as you can without pitching! God! God! That fiend has sprung forward and her! He crows back at her weapon. Brave girl! Nobly done in defence of the man who befriended you. Such a noble spirit! Redfield flinks back before her determined mien, and the fiend of her beautiful eyes. He is a coward. He retreats! Hurrah! She has overcome him. There! Now Murdock is released, and they are backing toward the cabin together, menaced by the crew, whom Redfield is inciting to attack them. God! I hope no harm will befall them! Ah! the men rush toward them, they turn, they run! The cabin door has closed upon the noble girl and the man whose life she saved! Faster, faster! my leave little craft! We will help them yet. Oh, the cowardly horde are striving to burst in the cabin door. Hurk! Is not that the faint echo of a pistol shot? The fiends are defending themselves! The crowd surges back, carrying the limp form of one of their number in their midst. Oh, why do we not sail faster? Bob!"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"Tie up the wheel to lock, and trim away the port gun!"

"Are you a-goin' ter fire on 'em?"

"Yes. Quick. It will divert their attention to us!"

"Sure enough. That'll give us time!"

The word to the gunners he spoke, and prepared it.

"Bring out the gaff-topsail!" exclaimed Joe to the sailors.

"But it's blowin' hard, sir!" interposed one of the men.

"Never mind—do as I say—she can stand it."

"Captain—"

"I will catch that bark in five minutes or cap-she the yacht do you hear? Hurry up! Do you want those

innocent women butchered by that inhuman crew of cut-throats?"

"No, no!" cried the sailors, to whose nature a woman in distress is the strongest appeal. "We'll save 'em or die. Hurrah. hurrah, hurrah!"

The dark eastern sky had broken, showing a rolling sea, while afar in the distance the bark, with all sails set, was plunging along in a frantic endeavor to elude her pursuer. The yacht was under main and stay-sails, and was speeding over the sea at a rapid pace. A sailor had gone below, and now came out bearing in his arms a long and short pole, to which a light top-sail was lashed. It was made fast to the halyards, and hoisted up to the forty-foot topmast, when the strong wind caught and bellied it out. The Nymph began to labor and strain as a large jib top-sail was raised. She buried her bows in the curling waves and rushed through the seas at a frightful pace, all hands going to the lee side as her weather decks were half-buried in the foam. The Dragon was but a mile ahead, and in an incredibly short space of time the yacht caught up to her, when down came the jib top-sail and gaff top-sail with a run. The crew of the bark had been on the point of assaulting the cabin door with a battering-ram, when the gun on the deck of the Nymph poured forth its thunder and iron, appalling them.

"Haul to!" shouted Joe, in stern tones. "Haul to, or I'll sink you!"

The demoralization of Redfield was almost complete.

He was forced to obey, but nearly cried with chagrin.

Joe then sent Bob on board the bark with an order for the release of the prisoners. Haranguing and rage were superfluous, for Bob soon returned with the two women and the man.

"And now," said Joe delightedly, "for Brazil."

The bark drove away to the east, and the sloop turned to the south, when Murdock handed Joe a note which Redfield bade him deliver.

"Do not imagine," said the note, "that you are safe, or that your triumph will endure. Ere you accomplish your object the treasure will be in my hands again, you will find a sudden death, your vessel will be scuttled, and Lucy Travers will be my wife, by fair means or by foul. I have sworn it. A. R."

CHAPTER IX.

THE CONSPIRATORS.

"Gentlemen, it is a most heinous, arbitrary and tyrannical decree! Dom Pedro II. de Alcantara must arbitrate, for Buenos Ayres will not concede the independence of Uruguay and Paraguay!"

"General Rosas is right. Since the rival factions of 1841 in Sao Paulo rent the peace of the new crowned bay emperor, he has had and must have to fear the wrath of our provinces! He has no other course now to suggest it! Like Minas Geraes, we will go on with the war!"

"But it was only for a year, for the Royalist and San Luis suppressed them."

"True, come, but then what of it? We have cut down them and Uruguaya, despite the fact that it is the hope of the troops of Entre Rio, Corrientes and Uruguay. What is to be done too dictatorial!"

The speakers were three well-dressed men, a colony, who sat in a large private room in a house in the city of Rio de Janeiro.

All dark men of middle age, swarthy and tough of mien, as all the grandees of the interior provinces, but having an aristocratic proud bearing that plainly bespoke the noble blood that coursed their veins. They were plotting the overthrow of the Brazilian Empire, for Dom Pedro the pithy emperor desired the independence of the two provinces and Buenos Ayres was bitterly opposed to it. At the very moment the conspirators were congregated there a counter plot of the most serious kind was hatching against them in a nearby locality, of which they did not for a moment dream, although they were surrounded by guards at all modes of ingress down-stairs.

The city of Rio is now the capital of Brazil, and since the seat of government was removed from Bahia the city was rebuilt and additions made to it, called the New city, to distinguish it from the old settlement, although only an elegant square called Campo de Acclamacao, the largest in the world, separates the new from the old town. It was in a two storied granite house in a narrow street back of the north side of the Campo that the conspirators were putting their plans in operation, and the bells in one of the many magnificent monuments

were chiming the hour of ten. This monastery was situated in the street directly at back of the house in which they held their meeting, and was occupied by a sect of Dominican monks and priests, who numbered ten or twelve in all. Of a Jesuit order, the mysteries of the priests in the privacy of their habitation was a matter of curiosity to the inhabitants of Rio, and, as the sequel will show, their suspicions were not without foundation.

The room in which sat the Buenos Ayres men was, as said, large, and commanded a good view of different parts of the city. Its inmates had a good reason for this, for their guards could apprise them of the approach of danger with the utmost facility, when they could easily escape.

"There is ease in planning," said the man called Count, but funds are what is most needed to carry out our projects, and money we lack."

"Could any of the senate or Chamber of Deputies be bribed?" asked Rosas.

"Well," said the count, reflectively, "Dom Pedro is governed in a peculiar manner. His position is hereditary. You know he has Isabella, Leopoldina and others by the Princess Theresa Christina Maria, the daughter of King Francis I. of the two Sicilies, though the monarchy is limited and constitutional, sharing as it does with the general assembly of law-making power."

"What is your opinion, marquis?" asked Rosas of the other.

"I have little to say, for you know, general, that the Senate is a life position for its members, and the Chamber of Deputies a four-year position. Hence the Senate is unassailable, and there are probabilities with the latter. Both are chosen by electors who represent fifteen families, who are themselves elected voters, who enjoy elective franchise and must have a yearly income. Unlike our provinces, which elect for three and two years, is it not? Here the judiciary consists of four *relacos*, eight judges and twelve judges of the supreme tribunal, all of whom are only removable by impeachment."

"Is it not possible for us to work upon them?" queried Rosas, significantly.

"What can be obtained?" asked the marquis.

"Control of the mine incomes."

"Impossible."

"Then we can do nothing, for we need half a million."

"In that case the war must go on unaided save by our own resources," said the count.

General Rosas looked very much dissatisfied. He was a brave soldier and a good man at heart, but he knew there could be but a miserable warfare carried on with starving, unpaid troops.

They were all so much occupied with their discussion they did not imagine that all they uttered was overheard by a hidden eavesdropper. Behind them a large silken portiere hung over a doorway. The folds were, to all appearances, tightly drawn together, yet, while they were talking, they might have seen the silk shake slightly, and it was drawn aside at the height of five feet from the floor, and the upper portion of a man's face appeared in the narrow opening. He peered down at the conspirators, listening to every word they uttered, and a sinister look of intense satisfaction crept into his basilisk eyes at what they planned, and he softly whispered to himself:

"Do they want money, do they? Well, they shall have it—plenty of it—millions! millions!"

He chuckled. He felt that he had secured this, for a sudden knock on the door of the study looking general arrested him, to plunge down the folds of the curtain to offer a card and the great door opened, and there his presence was announced. The conspirators then resumed their discussion of plans and things.

The discussion grew animated and heated, the marquis and count reflecting some view which the general presented, which did not happen to meet with their approval, when suddenly, and as if a bomb had burst in their midst, they were startled by hearing a slight cough.

With one accord they sprang to their feet from beside the table at which they sat, and facing the huge silken portiere which hung in a doorway, they were astonished to see it swept aside and a stranger appear in the opening.

"Treason!" exclaimed the fat marquis, who was first to recover his faculties. "What means this? Are we betrayed? God defend us if we are!"

"It is an Englishman," replied the count, who was a thin man, scrutinizing the stranger.

"A naval officer," supplemented Rosas.

"Gentlemen," said the stranger in their own language, as he bowed and advanced into the room, "I beg your pardon for intruding upon you."

"What," cried the count, "is he? How came you to enter

here unchallenged by the guards? Are you an agent of the law, or who are you?"

"I did not enter by the door," replied the other. "It was my knowledge that beneath the bridge spanning yonder inlet there existed a secret door with a subterraneous passage leading here which gave me free ingress to this house, into the hollow walls, and thence by a hidden door to the other room."

"How came you to know the secret passages?"

"Because, sir, I was once a resident of this house."

"And now?" demanded the marquis.

"And now I am a follower of the sea."

"You have overheard our conversation?" threateningly asked Rosas.

"Every word of it," was the emphatic reply.

"In that case," said the general, calmly, as he drew a pistol from his pocket, cocked it, and deliberately pointed the muzzle at the brain of the new-comer, "you cannot live to betray us to our enemies!"

"My friend, put up your weapon," said the sailor, coolly. "I have no such intent."

"How do we know that?" demanded the general.

"If you have patience, I will satisfy your mind. Besides, if you should discharge that weapon, several of my men, who are now concealed in the secret passage, would rush in and take your lives!"

The conspirators gazed blankly at each other.

"What shall we do with him?" whispered the marquis.

"Shoot him, and risk the consequence!" was the count's angry reply.

"No, no," said Rosas, reflectively; "let us call aid, and make him our prisoner."

"Gentlemen," said the new-comer, who had been stealthily watching them, and a derisive scornful smile hovered about his dark mustached mouth, "you are heedlessly alarming yourselves. I am a good friend to you."

"How do you mean?" demanded Rosas abruptly.

"I am an enemy to the emperor."

"Can you prove it?"

"Very easily. You are from Buenos Ayres, are you not?"

"If you overheard our talk you know it already," said Rosas.

"And desire money to help your schemes to maintain the dependency of Uruguay and Paraguay?" and again he quietly smiled to himself.

"Such is our wish, sir."

"Then I can provide you with the value of half a million pesos!"

"Impossible—how—what mean you?"

"In the first place, my name is Alfred Redfield."

"Ha! The emissary of the emperor to find the treasure of the sunken Venus?"

"The same, gentlemen, and I have succeeded!"

"Do you refer to that treasure?"

"Yes, sir. It was stolen from me. The one who gained it is coming to Rio on the sloop Nymph and may arrive to-night in the bay. The treasure is hidden in his vessel. You can easily get it."

"Why do you give us this information?"

"To avenge myself upon Joseph Mortimer, the captain of the sloop."

"Mortimer? Is it not the late superintendent of the mint?"

"No; he is dead. It is his son. I left him on the high seas, and knowing the shortest route I could arrive to-day, as you can see by the Daily Journal, ahead of him, and with the object of wresting the fortune from him. To assure you of my sincerity, and to gain your cooperation, I will place at your power by confessing that I desire to find the secret of the diamonds, but was thwarted by the stripling who now holds them. He had guns—I none."

"You speak frankly, sir," said Rosas. "We will test you."

"Do so. I do not want the treasure as much as I want vengeance."

"And you will give this treasure over to us?"

"I will help you to secure it."

"And will you remain with us voluntarily until then?"

"Most willingly. Ha! what is that—a gun?"

"Ay—it announces the arrival of a vessel."

"It must be the Nymph."

"We can easily see out this window."

The four men went to the iron-barred aperture and gazed out at the bay.

It was a clear, moonlit night, and everything was so clearly outlined as if the sun was shining. There were several vessels anchored in the bay, every one painted black, but coming up toward the city, which is built near the entrance to the bay, was a beautiful white steamer.

"It is the Nymph, sure enough!" exclaimed Rosas.

"And that vessel contains the stolen treasure?" asked Rosas.

"Ay. Thousands of diamonds of the first water. Have you any trusty men near?"

"Many of them," replied the other.

"Then lose no time in summoning help, and with me board yonder vessel when its inmates, anchored, are at slumber, or to-morrow the emperor will get the gems."

"Shall we venture?" whispered the count, timidly.

"Under every circumstance," replied the marquis.

"There is no time for delay," said the general, decisively.

"Never again will such an opportunity occur. Already there are rumors of an emancipation of slavery here! Great Britain is in dispute with the emperor on account of the non-observance of a treaty regulating the abolition of slave trade, and it can only result in a settlement by prohibition of the traffic. In that case white laborers may be employed—the consequence will be more vigilance, and then each diamond mined or washed will not escape the government."

"Then summon assistance!" exclaimed the count.

"In the meantime," said Rosas, grimly, "cover this man with a pistol."

He went out as he spoke, and left Redfield under the guard of the others.

"In half an hour he returned to the room, and said:

"Boats await us at the wharf. How is the sky?"

"Clouding over," replied the count, glancing out the window.

"Very good. It will conceal our movements. And the sloop?"

"Has come to an anchorage. All save two men on watch have retired."

"Providence favors us. I have bribed the guards in her vicinity on the land to fall asleep in remote places, so we have nothing to fear. And for you, sir," he added, turning to Redfield, "if we find you are playing us false, we will surely kill you, for we have too much at stake to run any unnecessary risks to endanger ourselves. On the other hand—if we can succeed, and you will help us, not only will you be richly rewarded, but the government of Buenos Ayres will confer upon you royal marks of esteem which you will never regret. And now—come! We will go. We will embark in the boats in half an hour, proceed to the vessel of whose object the emperor has no intimation, and attack its inmates."

"And I," cogitated Redfield, with a sinister smile as he followed the others out, "will go—will help you secure the treasure, and once on land, God help all of you!"

CHAPTER X.

THE EMPEROR.

When the Nymph was heading in for the bay of Rio, Joe was on deck talking to Lucy Travers, while Philip Murdock engaged the attentions of Miss Brown. Gladdened at the sight of land again after a rough voyage, every man of the crew, including Juno, had come up from below.

Bob held the wheel, and as the gun was discharged, announcing their arrival, a boat came alongside containing what appeared to be several customs officials.

Fortunately Joe could speak their language, and when asked for his papers, he said:

"I have none, as my vessel has been employed in the interests of the emperor."

"We have no record of this craft, sir," said the chief official.

"Certainly not. I have, however, in my possession the treasure which was lost in the schooner Venus, which left this country five years ago."

The officers exchanged significant glances which Joe did not fail to observe.

Then they held a whispered consultation near the mast, when after a moment a figure arose stealthily from a coil of rope near them and hurried up to Joe.

It was the negro boy Juno, who escaped the attention of the whispering men.

"Oh, massa Joe," he gasped. "Dem men am gwine fo' to take yo' to de prison."

"What do you mean," demanded Joe in some surprise.

"Dey des say dat Massa Redfield back come to-day, an' dey git paid by him ter coteh yo', take yo' en de prison till to-morrow, an' in de meantime dat or'nary rascal he come aboard wid help an' fine de treasure."

"Ha! a plot, eh? Then Redfield arrived ahead of us!"

"An' yo' put up wid dis yere debbiltry, sah?" asked Juno, indignantly.

"By no means! The diamonds are safely hidden, I am sure. We must outwit these rascals by some means. Here, Murdock—will you assume command?"

"But I cannot speak their lingo," said Philip dubiously.

"Never mind that, for Juno can translate everything for you."

"Very well; but what will you be doing in the meantime?"

"The emperor must be apprised of our mission before these rascals accomplish their design. I can plainly understand that Redfield means to keep his parting threat."

"But these fellows will allow no one to leave the sloop."

"Of course not. We must, however, circumvent them."

"How can it be done in the face of their authority?"

"Easily. I must go ashore. We do not know what danger may be ahead."

"But it would not do to fight them here in the bay."

"Such a course is unnecessary. I will lure them down into the fore-castle, where we can lock them in. Meantime run up to an anchorage, and leave every indication about the vessel that all hands but a small watch have turned in. You can arm all the men, and have them ready in the cabin to repel any one who may attack the vessel. Besides, as the ladies will be in the cabin, you must realize that their protection is quite necessary. How do we know what Redfield may be up to if he has already bought these forerunners into his service?"

"Doan yo' make no mistake, sah," said Juno, at this juncture, in a mysterious fashion. "Shuh 'nough, dis am de Custom House boat, an' dem t'ree men dey wear de reg'lacion suit, sah, but, fo' de Lawd, dey cain't fool dis chile."

"I do not understand you, Juno," said Joe, uneasily.

"Oh," said the little darky, chuckling and showing the whites of his eyes. "Whar am yo' sight, sah? Dem ain't ossifers; dem is some o' Redfield's crew, sah!"

"Ah! I believe you are right. They are disguised as port officials. In that case they have either bribed the officials proper, or else have forcibly taken possession of their boat and uniforms. Look out now, here they come."

"Gentlemen," said one of them, "as you say you have no papers, and your story is suspicious, we regret to say we must attach you and your craft, pending an examination to-morrow. Of course, if you have told the truth, you will be released."

"If you doubt my story, sir," said Joe, politely, "I will corroborate it."

"How can you do so?"

"By showing you the diamonds, sir."

The man started. By his eagerness as he turned to his companions Joe saw at once that he swallowed the cunningly contrived bait. They consulted in whispers a moment.

"Very well," said the disguised man presently, who was no one but Springer. "Show us these diamonds, and if they exist out of your imagination we will leave you unmolested."

"Come this way," said Joe. "I naturally have concealed them below."

He led the way to the companionway of the fore-castle.

"Are they down here?" queried Springer, gruffly.

"Yes, sir. Here is a lantern. I will follow."

He handed an ignited lantern to the rascal, who was trembling visibly from the excitement of his emotions, and the next instant, never pausing to think of treachery, the three men rushed headlong down the steep stairs, two of them ahead of Joe and the other behind him. The youth descended several steps to quell their suspicions, suddenly stopped, and the man behind him, tripping over his bent form, went crashing down upon the two others ahead, who, losing their equilibrium, fell to the bottom of the stairway, shouting with fury. Joe ran up the stairs, slammed the heavy oaken door shut, and securely bolted it outside.

"Well done," laughed Murdock, who stood close by.

"They are harmless for the present," said Joe. "Where is their boat?"

"Towing behind by its painter."

"Good. I can make use of it just now to reach land."

"Have you any further instructions for me?"

"None. I will return to the Nymph with assistance very soon."

"But can you not take the ladies ashore with you?"

"Impossible. Not only would they impede me, but they would be unsafe."

As he said this he went over the stern into the row-boat, cut the painter, and while the yacht passed on toward its anchorage he pulled toward the old part of the city. Upon reaching a quay at which a large number of small sail-boats were moored, which were used to convey passengers from incoming steamers to the shore, he made his boat fast, and found himself in a court-yard, on one side of which was a stone building, while the rest was inclosed in a half fence of iron rails. There was a gate, but it was locked, so he climbed over the fence with some difficulty and reached the street.

No sooner were his feet on the pavement, when a man in

the uniform of a soldier with a short sword at his side, stepped from a doorway and seized him.

"Rascal!" he exclaimed. "What have you been doing in there?"

"Unhand me!" cried Joe. "I am no criminal!"

"Your actions are suspicious, and you must come to the prison with me for identification," said the policeman. "Honest men do not do what you did."

Joe was appalled. He had no time to lose, as he did not know what hidden danger menaced those on the *Nymph*, as the advent of Redfield's men plainly showed him that he had more to expect. If he permitted arrest, he knew that he would not be examined until the next day. What terrible disasters might ensue during that interval he dared not try to imagine. He must escape this man at all hazards, although he was puzzled to know which way then to go. It would be useless to strive to explain his situation to the officer, who would no doubt regard it as a fable, and laugh at him for his pains.

With one look he measured up the man, who held one hand upon the hilt of his sword, while with the other he grasped Joe's left arm.

Then he doubled up his fist and struck out square from the shoulder.

Had a cannon-ball hit the policeman he could not have more completely been knocked off his legs; nor could he have seen more stars when he later on attempted to get up to see what struck him.

By the time he, in a dazed manner, regained his perpendicular, nothing was to be seen of Joe. Realizing that time was precious, he had run around a corner, and did not pause until he had reached the Campo. Then he glanced at his watch and saw that it was nearly ten o'clock.

There were several people about, most of them having returned home, and accosting a man whom he met, he asked to be directed to the residence of the emperor. The man seemed surprised at his request, but complied, and Joe made his way to the palace with all possible speed.

It was closed, but he met several soldiers at the entrance. "My friend," he said to one of them, "I want to see the emperor."

"Impossible, sir—you will have to call to-morrow."

"But it is on business of the utmost importance."

"Our orders are strictly to admit no one on any pretext."

"Can a note from me reach him?"

"If he has not retired."

"Do this errand for me, and you will receive ample remuneration."

"I will do my best, sir. Will you enter this apartment?"

"Thank you; I can write there."

They passed through a door into a room on the ground floor, which was plainly furnished, and seating himself at a table, Joe wrote:

"To the Emperor, Dom Pedro II. of Brazil:

"The writer, Joseph Mortimer, begs for an audience of a few moments. I have in my possession the box of diamonds stolen by Pablo Hernandez from the mines of Geraes five years ago, and at the solicitation of my father have regained them from the sea to return them. Beset by enemies who desire to gain possession of the treasure, your immediate attention will save the stones.

"JOSEPH MORTIMER."

"Perhaps not as formal as it should be, but it suits my needs," said Joe.

"Is this the note?" queried the guard as Joe enveloped it.

"See that the emperor receives it, and you will be richly rewarded."

The soldier took the note, and passing through another door, after calling another guard to remain with the young captain, he disappeared.

Not five minutes elapsed when again he appeared in the room.

"Well?" asked Joe, nervously.

"The emperor was up and desires to see you at once."

Joe was delighted. He followed the soldier into a spacious marble corridor, and there was met by a tall, military-looking gentleman whom he later discovered was General Urquiza. This personage glanced sharply at him.

"We will dispense with formality," said he. "Your name tells us who you are, and the emperor will grant you a moment. Come with me."

The corridors were all dimly illuminated, and when they presently entered a small room on the second floor, in which the lights glared brilliantly, Joe for a moment was dazzled. When his eyes finally became accustomed to the strong ef-

fulgence of light he saw that the apartment was plainly furnished.

Beside a marble-topped table near a door sat a man of about fifty.

It was Dom Pedro—the emperor.

He glanced at Joe fixedly for a moment, then asked in low tones:

"Have you brought those ill-fated diamonds with you?"

"Sir, they are concealed in a locker on board of my vessel which is anchored in the bay. Your emissary, Alfred Redfield, strove to appropriate them to his own use, but I have regained them, and beg for a guard to have them carried safely here."

"Your request is granted."

Joe bowed, and laying a paper before the emperor, he said:

"By this document you will learn the true history of the robbery of those gems from the mines. My father, as you perhaps know by the report of the man who was sent to arrest him, is dead. It is by his will and the mercy of God that I have thus vindicated his name from a vile blemish."

"You say that Alfred Redfield has striven to gain the treasure?" asked the emperor.

"Such was his intention," said Joe, and thereupon he related all that befell him in his cruise, to which the emperor listened attentively, and when Joe finished he said:

"You have done nobly. I appreciate your efforts. But we must not lose time. We know not what rascality may be pending even now. Once these diamonds are in my possession, I will richly reward you, sir. Urquiza," he added, turning to the general, "call a captain and a guard of fifty men to accompany Mr. Mortimer to his vessel."

The general made a respectful obeisance.

"And for you, sir," said Dom Pedro, arising. "I hope to see you to-morrow. The liberty of my domains will be given you, after I have spoken to you in the morning. This confession I will read, and for your efforts again I thank you."

Joe bowed as the emperor passed from the room, and following the general to the quarters of the soldiers, a platoon, under one captain and a lieutenant, were placed at his disposal, the general saying that he would find him awaiting Joe's return in the room in which they just met the emperor.

The young sailor was delighted with his success.

Finding the captain of the guard a jovial, rollicking fellow, the trip to the bay was quickly passed. Joe and the captain were in advance of the others, and just as the bay opened out before them he heard a pistol-shot on the water.

"Heavens!" he exclaimed. "See! There are several boats alongside of the *Nymph*. There sounds another pistol! They are attacked! This is Redfield's work!"

"The barge! The barge!" shouted the captain. "Hurry up, my boys!"

There were two vessels moored at the foot of a flight of steps leading to the water's edge, and these were quickly unfastened, the soldiers sprang in, the oars were grasped, and a moment after both barges swung out on the bay.

The sharp flash and reports of pistols on the yacht followed in quick succession, mingled with the shouts of men; then suddenly all became still, and they saw some people spring over the sides into the boats and row rapidly away.

It was impossible to catch or shoot them, so, with the worst apprehension, Joe told them to continue on to the yacht. When they reached the *Nymph* everything was in confusion. Not a man was to be seen. Then came the sound of a distant shriek from over the waters that pierced Joe's heart like a dagger. He sprang into the cabin, followed by the captain. The girls were gone! Juno lay on the floor with Murdock beside him, both apparently dead. With a sickening feeling at heart Joe flew to the secret locker and tore it open.

The deep sea treasure was gone.

CHAPTER XI.

AN ENCOUNTER.

"Just heaven! who has wrought this mischief?" cried Joe, turning a blank look upon Captain Alvarez. "The treasure has vanished."

"What!" exclaimed the other, in startled tones. "It is gone?"

"Stolen!" was the young captain's anguished reply. "See! The locker is empty."

"Was the treasure in there?"

"Ay. Only Juno beside myself knew the existence of the locker."

"Then he must have betrayed it to the thieves?"

"No, no! He is a faithful boy and would not do that."

"They may have forced the secret from him by torture."

"I doubt it. Besides the robbery, the marauders have abducted two ladies from here."

"This is outrageous, sir."

"Will you do me the favor to send ten men on board the bark 'Dragon,' lying up at the head of the bay, to search her for the treasure or some sign of the ladies?"

"Certainly. Besides that, I will leave them on board in possession of the vessel, placing her crew under arrest, and will take the captain as soon as he arrives."

"Excellent! Meantime I will examine these men."

As the young captain spoke he turned toward Juno and Murdock.

"One word more, please," said the soldier, as Joe knelt beside them. "Do you not think it advisable to send notice of this trouble to the palace?"

"Ah, yes. General Urquiza is awaiting us. I did not think of him. I believe that if troops are scattered about to capture the marauders in good time they cannot escape with their booty. The more haste the better, Mr. Alvarez."

The young Brazilian nodded and hurried out.

Joe then bent over Murdock and saw that he was lifeless.

A dagger pierced his heart.

Juno was alive, but unconscious. There was a bad scalp wound on his head, which would certainly have killed a white man. Joe bathed the boy's feverish temples with water and poured some brandy down his throat. Under these stimulants he presently regained his senses in a bewildered state.

"Oh, Massa Joe," was his first cry, while tears coursed down his cheeks, "what dis chile do? Dey come heah, sah, an' we fight 'em, but dey hab hand-grenades, an' scare the men dref-ful so dey gib in, sah, arter dey shoot some. Massa Murdock an' me, we say we's gwine ter fight it out, an' we spec' yo' come back soon, but yo' didn't come, an' dey stab po' Murdock. Massa Redfield he nigh kill dis chile wid de stock ob a musket. Arter dat doan know nuffin'. Guess he knock de brains outer me."

"Did you see them carry off the girls and my men?"

"No, sah. I 'member dey wanter know whar de di'mon's be, but dis chile say nuffin'."

"Who was with Redfield?"

"Dunno, but I spees dey wuz de natives—one he call markis an' de udder he call count, an' anudder he call gineral. Dunno who dey be, dough."

"Did you not tell them where the treasure was?"

"No, sah!" said Juno, emphatically.

"Well, the treasure is gone, my lad."

The consternation of the colored boy knew no bounds.

"Golly!" he cried, in distressed tones. "Den all our wuck go fur nuffin', shuah!"

Joe went out on deck a moment later, and joined Captain Alvarez, with Juno.

"We can do nothing here," he said. "Let us go ashore."

"Very well," replied the other. "I will leave a guard here for you."

They were taken to land, when one of the soldiers approached them.

"We have found the sailors," he said, "down by the entrance to the bay, all bound and gagged, and have sent them on board the yacht in a rowboat."

"Did you discover any traces of the thieves?"

"None whatsoever."

"Keep up the search. And the general?"

"He was sorry to hear the news, and wants to see Mr. Mortimer to-morrow. All the police are on the lookout for the marauders."

"That will do. And now, Mr. Mortimer, what will you do?"

"If you will direct me to a hotel, we will retire."

The captain furnished the information, and they parted.

Joe was frightfully uneasy, and could not remain indoors. It seemed as if he found relief in activity, so after a physician had dressed Juno's wounds they sallied out. It was long past midnight, and although the moon had disappeared behind some heavy cloud banks, a cool breeze was blowing.

Taking a side street, they were pressing on toward the water when two carriages came through the street at such a furious pace as to attract their attention. Stepping into the doorway of a cafe, Joe watched the carriages narrowly.

That they were occupied by several people was evident.

When they came nearer, the two boys were startled by hearing a muffled shriek emanate from the foremost vehicle.

Just then half a dozen dark-faced, villainous-looking men entered the cafe by another entrance, and the leader of the party, one of the two boys, suddenly started, and at once whispered something to the others. There was only one

man behind the bar, and a couple of waiters talking to him at the time, nobody occupying the marble tables, and the interior presented a dingy, second-rate appearance, which was not improved by its poor illumination of greasy, smoky lamps.

As Joe was straining his eyes upon the carriages the ruffianly set behind him drew from various places of concealment about their persons weapons that would make a beholder shudder, and with the murderous-looking knives clutched tightly they crept stealthily toward the boys.

"It is a woman in distress, Juno!" exclaimed the young captain.

"Reckon it is, sah. Ah! what am dat? Anodder screech—anodder voice!"

"It is two women! Here they are—see, this street light falls into the carriage. Oh, my God! Juno! see—see! It is Lucy Travers and Miss Brown, in the clutches of that fiend, Alfred Redfield, and three other men!"

The next moment he drew his revolver and sprang out into the middle of the street.

"Halt!" he cried, presenting the weapon at the head of the driver. "Halt, or I will fire!"

"May the Holy Virgin protect me!" cried the man, pulling in his reins.

"The fiend seize this boy!" roared Redfield, in furious tones.

"He thwarts us!"

"Villain!" shouted Joe, "unhand those ladies, or, by heavens, I will shoot you!"

"Joe, Joe!" shrieked Lucy, frantically, "save me! Oh, save me!"

"What is this?" cried the marquis angrily. "A highway robber?"

"An enemy! Shoot him down!" hissed Redfield.

"The diamonds!" gasped the count. "By Saint Peter, he will rob us!"

"Massa Joe, dey'se got de box!" shouted Juno, who overheard this remark.

"Run for assistance, Juno!"

"Give me the treasure!" exclaimed Redfield.

"No, no!" replied the count, suspiciously. "I can hold it."

At this moment the men in the cafe ran out the door.

"At last!" cried Redfield, upon seeing them. "Help, Springer! Quick! There goes the nigger, and in a few moments the police will be upon us!"

Before Joe could turn he received a stunning blow on the head from behind and fell over.

Looking up, he saw an array of daggers gleaming over him. But his courage did not forsake him. He still clutched his revolver, and in a moment raised himself up on his elbow.

"Back!" he cried, leveling his pistol.

They paid no heed to him, and he pulled the trigger.

Following the shot there came a howl of mortal anguish from one of his enemies, who reeled back and fell to the ground.

The daggers were uplifted to deal him his death, when again and again his pistol rang out.

Two more men went down, and the rest were driven back for an instant.

He jumped to his feet and retreated toward the carriage before they recovered.

"The treasure-box!" shouted Redfield.

"What do you mean?" demanded the count, in surprise.

"Springer," shouted Redfield, "come this way!"

"Ha!" cried the marquis, suspiciously, "it is a plot! We are in an ambush! He has secured our aid so he could get the treasure, and has had these men in waiting for us! Count, if you have a weapon, defend yourself!"

"Dare to move a hand at your peril!" thundered Redfield.

"Holy Virgin!" groaned the fat marquis, crossing himself, "we are ruined!"

"Hand me that treasure!" was the imperative command.

"Never!" shouted the count, and he sprang from the carriage with the box.

"Stop him!" cried Redfield furiously.

"Murder!" shrieked the other, as one of Springer's men grasped him.

"Shut up!" cried the wretch, clutching his throat and raising his dagger.

"In mercy, spare me!" gurgled the poor count, struggling to get away.

"Down with him!" came the voice of Redfield.

The assassin's knife descended, and with a deep groan the count sank to the ground, while the villain grasped the treasure box.

Redfield was struggling in the carriage with the marquis, when again Joe was assisted by Springer and the other. The youth fired one shot at him, the first of which took effect, when they rushed up to him. He had aimed and

was quite in the act of lifting the bound form of Lucy from the carriage, when Springer dealt him a frightful blow on the temple which stretched him senseless. The next moment Springer's companion violently flung the insensible marquis from the vehicle.

No sooner was this done when there came the sound of many people approaching up the street, and Redfield, grasping the treasure in his hands, looked back.

"Fly!" he cried hoarsely. "Fly, upon your lives! The soldiers are coming, and have seized upon the other carriage in which were your friends!"

His hired accomplices scattered and skulked away, while Springer got into the driver's seat, and seizing the reins, he lashed the spirited team, and they dashed furiously away. Juno had come in advance of the guard he summoned, and as the carriage started he ran up to it and swung his agile body up behind on the springs, and was carried away with the fugitives.

CHAPTER XII.

IN THE TOILS.

Joe Mortimer regained consciousness in his hotel, and found Captain Alvarez and a physician beside his bed, watching him closely.

"The treasure!" was his first query. "Have you regained it?"

"No," said Alvarez in melancholy tones. "The rascals escaped."

"Did they bear the girls with them?"

"Yes. The negro boy came for me with the news that you were attacked, but when we arrived on the scene the villains had decamped."

"And Juno?" asked Joe. "What became of him?"

"I do not know—he disappeared."

"When did it occur?"

"Over three hours ago. It is now nearly daylight."

"Who were the men with Redfield?"

"Two noted noblemen from Buenos Ayres. One was killed—the other wounded. Thinking he was fatally injured, we did not pay much heed to him, when he quietly slipped away from us, making his escape."

Joe arose from the bed, feeling somewhat dizzy from the effect of the blow he received.

"I cannot stay here!" he exclaimed.

"But, my good friend," expostulated the doctor, "it is highly

"Am I dangerously hurt, sir?" interrupted Joe testily.

"No, sir; still it is best to—"

"Then I will not play invalid—"

At this moment the door was burst open, and Juno rushed in.

"Hello!" exclaimed Alvarez. "What's the matter?"

"Glory halleluyah!" cried the boy exultingly, "I've found 'em! I've found 'em!"

"Who have you found?" quickly demanded Joe.

"Whar dey am gwine, sah!"

"Ha!" said Alvarez with interest. "Have you tracked the abductors?"

"Yes, sah. But come on wid me, sah, or maybe dey harm dem gals!"

"Captain," said Joe, feverishly, "can you accompany us?"

"Certainly," replied the courteous and obliging officer. "Where is it, boy?"

"Yo' know whar dat creek am, sah, at de bridge?"

"Have they gone there?"

"Dar dey went wid me behin' de kerridge. Den when it stopped I go down behin' a tree an' all 'em take out de wimmen, and go undah de bridge. I des feller 'em an' peek in, an' wha' yo' sink? What shed dey do but go in a hole which yo' 'spec is de plankin' when it am shut undah de bridge."

"Ah," said Joe, glancing significantly at the captain. "A secret passage!"

That was enough. They armed themselves and left the hotel, taking a carriage at the door to the vicinity of the inlet, where they dismissed it and went on with more caution. Under Joe's guidance they went down under the bridge, opened the plank door, and found themselves in a dark passage with a paved floor above their heads. Although they had a lantern, they did not know what to do with it, and they did not light it. The passage was long, perfectly dry, and led them straight on for some distance. As they went, they heard the steady footsteps of men.

"There is somebody in the tunnel," whispered Joe, who was in advance.

"Be careful of an ambuscade!" whispered the captain.

"I will keep along the wall—you do likewise, and—"

But at this moment his foot struck something soft—he stumbled, and pitched over the prostrate form of a man! It was lucky he did not maintain an upright position, for something hard, which gave a metallic ring and emitted sparks, struck the wall in the spot his body had just evacuated. The next instant Captain Alvarez ignited a match, and by its flame Joe saw the marquis crouching against the wall. The next instant he fell upon him and tore a knife from his hand, the captain meantime having lighted the lantern.

"Why," ejaculated Alvarez in surprise as his light fell on the other, "it's the marquis!"

"Well," said the person addressed, in sulky tones, "what do you want in here?"

"Come, come, my innocent friend," laughed Alvarez, "we know you."

"I have done you no harm."

"But you contemplated it. So this is where you escaped to, eh?"

"What do you want in here?" he persisted.

"We are after your worthy colleagues."

"Do you mean Redfield?"

"Yes, sir, and the rest of his crew."

"I am after the same people myself."

"Now that is too bad," said Alvarez gravely. "We cannot permit it."

"There is no use of concealment," said the marquis. "You know I am an enemy to Brazil, and you have me. But do you know what Redfield did? By lies he inveigled myself and the count into this plot to steal the box of diamonds from the American vessel. After we lent him valuable assistance by procuring a custom house launch and men to get the box from the yacht, he killed the count and tried to murder me with hired assassins. I won't stand that. Besides, as I am at your mercy, let me gain the clemency of the court by betraying my enemy into your hands."

"That is a good proposition," said Joe.

"Well, I don't ask for my liberty, because I know you won't give it to me, so let me have revenge upon a deep-dyed rascal. I am acquainted with the arrangement of these passages, and can lead you directly to the house this one leads to. By my instrumentality you can effect Redfield's capture."

"Can we trust him?" asked Joe of Alvarez.

"No. He comes of a treacherous race," was the reply. "You can trust him no further than you can see him. If he is bound, though, I believe he will be rendered helpless; so tie up his hands and arms."

Joe did so, the eyes of the marquis flashing with fury meanwhile.

"There. Now you can go on as our guide," said Joe when he finished.

"I am very uncomfortable," said the marquis, "but suppose I can ask for nothing else, as I am your prisoner, so follow me."

"At any sign of treachery your doom is sealed," said Alvarez, threateningly.

"Oh, you need have no fear of me," said the marquis calmly.

They left the lantern burning and kept him ahead of them.

Proceeding some distance in this manner, they presently emerged into a room, or cellar. A most horrible sight was revealed, which brought forth expressions of disgust from them. The floor was literally strewn with the skeletons of men, and a peculiar odor filled the air. The walls were of stone, and at one end was a huge grating set in the floor.

"What is this charnel house you have brought us into?" demanded Alvarez.

"This—oh," and the marquis laughed softly. "We call it the burial ground."

"Isn't it a cellar?"

"Yes. Above us is the house in which our enemies are concealed."

"Who killed all these men?"

"A maniac."

"A maniac? I do not understand."

"Well, this cellar is inhabited by a maniac whose chief delight is to kill men."

"And where is the monstrous wretch at present?"

"He is here yet—confined so that he will never escape."

"Alive?" demanded Joe.

"Certainly he is. Who knows when we may need him?"

"What! Need him? What for, I'd like to know?"

"Why, to aid the conspirators from Buenos Ayres who are at this house of their enemies."

"Ah! then this is your rendezvous, and you are the authors of these crimes?"

"You may call it such if you like."

"Is that hideous murderer in this cellar now?" asked Alvarez.

"He is," said the marquis, with a chuckle.

"Whereabouts?" demanded Joe.

The marquis pointed at the monstrous iron grating in the floor in the corner.

"He is confined in a sort of sub-cellar beneath that grating," he said.

"This is beastly!" exclaimed Joe.

"If you wish to see him," said the marquis, carelessly, "all you have to do is to look down through the grating with your lantern."

Joe and the captain walked toward the grating, and as the marquis did not follow them, Juno remained behind him a silent spectator.

As the two young men approached the iron bars in the floor they saw that they were of huge proportions, and covered with a thick coating of rust.

They stepped upon the bars together, at the same moment, and took a step toward the centre, bending over with their lantern, so as to let its rays go down into the dark pit below. When they suddenly heard a hissing noise like a thousand steam whistles, they felt the pivoted grating tip, and the next moment they were precipitated down into the dark lair of an enormous boa-constrictor. The frightful serpent had been captured in the interior of the country, and brought to its present prison for a dark purpose, best known to the merciless wretches who made a rendezvous of the house.

The moment the iron grating had been liberated of the weight of the two young men it swung back into its normal position.

The cellar was cast in profound darkness, only a dim ray of light over the grating showing that the lantern which Alvarez carried had not been extinguished by his fall of a dozen feet directly upon the coils of the boa.

"Baffled!" cried the marquis, in jubilant tones. "Baffled! By all the saints, I have disposed of them well, and to-morrow nothing will be left of them to tell that the ravenous, half-starved boa-constrictor within that pit has found a meal at last. And now to entice the rest of the English dogs down here to share the fate of their hated kindred!"

He turned to move away as he spoke, when Juno seized him by the throat.

"Fo' de Lawd!" exclaimed the boy fiercely. "Yo' stay heah an' release 'em, or I'll strangle yo'!"

CHAPTER XIII.

IN THE SECRET PASSAGES.

The marquis was astonished and frightened.

With his arms bound together behind his back, and a bad stab wound in his side from the dagger of Redfield's emissary, he had by artful trickery been instrumental in precipitating Joe and Captain Alvarez into the pit wherein was confined one of the most terrible scourges of South Africa—a huge boa-constrictor. And, while chuckingly congratulating himself upon his knavishness, to have Juno seize him by the throat and order him to liberate the two men, threw quite a damper over his delight.

"Let me go!" he gurgled. "Let me go!"

"Yo' git dem outer dere—quick!" cried Juno, furiously.

"I can't!"

"Den I frow yo' en wid 'em!"

"No—no! Mercy!" shrieked the frightened marquis.

"Did yo' hab any? No! Come on!" cried the boy.

Juno dragged him over toward the rusty iron grating.

The marquis was helpless and groaning frightfully.

"Let me go!" he yelled. "I will tell you how to get them out!"

"What are they? Speak quick!"

"Have you a watch?"

"A box full."

"Light one, and find a valve in the wall over there."

"Well—wha' nex'? No foolin' now, honey, or I frow you in sauh!"

"The fastest will, if opened, fill the pit with gas which will smother the beast."

"Is a ch gas kill de men, too?"

"Y' all better hold their breath as best they can until you let down a rope to them."

The marquis showed him a coil of rope.

Down in the pit, the experience of the two young men had been appalling.

When they fell into the pit the boa had been asleep, digesting a goat which had been swallowed a week before. There is a peculiarity about this immense serpent, sometimes erroneously called the anaconda. As its name suggests, it does not masticate its food, but constricts its coils about it, covers it with saliva, and then proceeds to swallow it whole, consuming hours in so doing, although its jaws can be distended to enormous dimensions.

Its habits are peculiar. It will coil itself about the overhanging branch of a tree and drop down on its prey, which passes beneath, and with the speed of lightning wraps its folds about the body and then commences to crush the life out of the unhappy wretch. After swallowing a goodly morsel it usually falls into a dormant coma, in which state it lies until its food is digested, when again it resumes its animation.

At the time the two young officers fell upon it the monster was just beginning to feel the pangs of hunger. The result was that it quickly uncoiled itself, and the two appalled youths found the horrible object gliding about them in a terrifying manner.

The lantern, as said, was yet lit, and by its light they saw into what a fearful predicament the roguery of the marquis had lured them. They were badly frightened, and at once drew their weapons.

"This is awful!" gasped Alvarez, as the perspiration burst out all over him.

"God help us," returned Joe. "We are doomed now."

"Look out! It is coming toward us! Such a monster! Over one hundred feet long!"

A pair of baleful eyes, scintillating with lurid fire, were fastened upon them fascinatingly, and the boa emitted another hiss, resembling a thousand escape-valves on an engine. Its huge tongue was darted out, and by its motions they saw that it meant to spring upon them.

"Draw your knife!" cried Joe, as he observed its peculiar actions.

"No, do not cut it!" replied Alvarez, anxiously, "unless you can sever its head from its body, or the threshing of those coils will beat us to a pulp!"

"Massa Joe!" came the voice of Juno overhead, "I'se gwine ter let in de gas. Hol' yo' bref or yo' choke. I soon get yo' out!"

But at this moment the boa sprang at Joe!

In an instant its deadly coils were about him.

He managed to keep his right arm free and as the huge body coiled about him, and began their awful pressure, he aimed a blow at its neck with his knife.

At the same moment Juno lowered a rope, which Alvarez seized, and he was hauled up. The keen knife almost severed the head from the monster, and in an instant the coils relaxed from Joe, and began writhing, coiling, uncoiling, twisting, lashing and beating the floor with such fearful force as to produce most thunderous sounds.

Once free, Joe got as far away from the decapitated reptile as possible, with the lantern in his hand. Several times those mighty coils were thrashing so close to him that they grazed his head, and he had the utmost difficulty to keep out of their way.

He was apprised by Juno that the rope was down again, but it seemed impossible to get hold of it for some time. When finally he did, and was hauled up, a sigh of most intense relief burst from his lips.

"Are you injured?" asked Alvarez, when he stood in their midst.

"Not in the least; I admit, though, I was scared badly."

The young soldier turned fiercely upon the marquis.

"Accursed wretch!" he cried. "It is you we can thank for this."

"But I helped to get you out again," whined the marquis.

"Ay—on compulsion. You shall now share our fate!"

"What!" ejaculated the other in frightened tones.

"You must go into that pit!"

"Mercy! It is too horrible! I will be devoured—"

"You are no better than we, and had no mercy on us."

"May the Holy Virgin protect me!" cried the marquis.

The captain was enraged, and before Joe could interfere, he caught hold of the fat rascal, who began to shout for help, and hurled him down into the pit!

"Good Heaven!" exclaimed Joe, shuddering. "You ought not to have done that."

"It is the justice of the Medea and Perseus!"

"Well," said Joe, as the yells of the horrified marquis, combined with the thunderous lashing of the gigantic serpent, reached their ears from the pit, "he deserves some punishment for his treachery, but nothing as horrifying as that! It is be-

yond Christianity—it is barbaric! Fortunately for him, however, I nearly cut the head off of the reptile, so the worst that could happen to him would be to have it crush him with its writhing coils which will continue to live until the sun sets."

"And that," said Alvarez, with savagely grim satisfaction, "will be many hours yet, as day has only just broken. Depend upon it, ere an hour passes he will meet the fate he designed for us, and it will be a good riddance, for not only is he a villainous wretch, but he is also an enemy to the empire I serve!"

"Massa Joe," said the negro boy, who had been passively listening to their dialogue, after shutting off the gas so that the marquis might not be overcome by its deadly fumes, "yo' forgit de ladies, sah!"

"Ah, yes! Mr. Alvarez, we must gain access to the house above."

"That is easily accomplished," said the captain, taking the lantern, "for here is an opening in this wall, which is probably a secret entrance."

They followed the intrepid captain into the hole in the wall. Examination verified Alvarez's surmise as they came to a spiral staircase which sinuously wound upward. They ascended this and found a landing on both floors of the house. Hearing no sound at the first, they mounted higher, and stopped before a door on the other side of which some people were evidently conversing in faintly audible tones.

"It is Redfield's voice!" whispered Joe, who listened at the door.

"Who is he talking to?" queried the captain, in low tones.

"Hark—they are speaking louder! What a providence we just arrived. Listen."

"Then you absolutely refuse to marry me?" came the tones of Redfield's voice.

"Marry you, you black-hearted wretch!" cried Lucy, scornfully. "Never! I would die a thousand deaths first, as I once told you. You had my final answer when with usual cowardice you tried to force this issue on your vessel. I was armed then!"

"Take my advice," said the man, in fiercely threatening tones, "and consider well what you are saying, girl! Remember, I am your master here, and having sworn on the occasion you allude to to marry you at any hazard, I now have the power to keep my oath, as all means are at my command!"

"No doubt you are rascal enough to pause at nothing."

"Sneer at me if you will; my love for you blinds me to the dignity and respect which I know is due to you as a lady. Why do you not consent in obedience to the force of circumstances? You are in my power, but I do not wish to exert it over you, Lucy. Spare me the guilt of committing indignities by viewing your case philosophically, and say that you will be mine. I have only to summon a priest, and Heaven can judge that I will be a good husband to lavish the tenderest affection upon you."

"All your blandishments," said the girl firmly, "are of no avail. I love but one person, though from Joe you first separated me by foul lies and innuendoes, which you sneakily whispered in the ears of our parents, and then you forcibly abducted me from the Nymph, thinking that by force and threats you could accomplish that for which you had striven on the bark, and when you were my father's treacherous clerk in the English Consulate at Havana. Do not aggravate your imagination by impossible hallucinations of my final defeat at this contemptible warfare, Alfred Redfield, for if the defiance I have flung in your face does not convince you of my resolution, let me tell you with what despite I hold you in my estimation! I am aware that no minister or priest can marry us if I am opposed to it!"

"So this is your answer, is it?" he cried furiously.

"It is. In a word, you wretch, I defy you!"

"Maledictions upon the hussy!" cried the enraged man.

The next moment there sounded a wild, piercing shriek, the patter of foot-falls, and a crash that thrilled the hidden listeners.

"Good Lord! He has attacked her!" cried Joe apprehensively. "Come! To her rescue, and to punish that fiend in human form!"

They strove to open the secret door, but it would not yield to their efforts, and they heard the sounds of a fierce struggle that filled them with dread.

Men's voices mingled with the screams of the frightened girls, and as the door continued to resist the force Joe brought against it, his heart was throbbing and his excitement increasing until it seemed as if he would suffocate.

"There is only one way," said the captain. "We must force the door."

"Hi dar!" cried Joe, in a hoarse, guttural voice, "let me try my hand!"

"A knob! Pull it, Juno. Ha, the door opens!" cried Joe.

The next moment they sprang into the room through the aperture.

A thrilling scene met their view.

Lucy was kneeling on the floor, with a look of intense horror upon her face, while Redfield stood over her, clutching her hair in his left hand with which he drew back her head, while he brandished a murderous-looking knife in his right hand before the eyes of his unhappy victim.

Upon the floor lay Matilda Brown, held there by two men, while near the door were several sailors from the Dragon.

"Look out!" cried one of the sailors, catching sight of Joe's party as they entered.

"I will kill you!" Redfield was violently shouting. "I will kill you unless you accede to my proposal. Speak—your answer—quick!"

"Kill me!" moaned the girl.

"Look out!" cried several of the sailors again.

"Ha! Intruders!" cried Redfield. "And, by the eternal, it is Mortimer again!"

"Let that lady go!" shouted Joe, furiously, as he advanced.

"What?" cried Redfield, with a coarse laugh. "Upon this young dastard, you lubbers, and scatter his brains upon the floor, or—"

At this moment Joe took deliberate aim at him with his revolver and fired.

"We shall see!" he cried.

"I am shot!" groaned Redfield, turning pale, staggering back, and the next moment he fell to the floor, crying frantically, "Avenge me, boys—I am dying!"

CHAPTER XIV.

TO BE CONTINUED!

The moment Redfield fell, Joe sprang toward Lucy, seized her in his arms and had run back to the secret door in the wall into which he thrust her.

"Fly!" he whispered. "Down the stairs to the cellar, and await us at the foot of the stair-case. Under no circumstances venture into the cellar, as it is dangerous."

The two men holding Miss Brown let her go and sprang up. One of them was Mr. Springer—the other evidently a Brazilian.

"Fire upon them, lads!" cried Springer. "Let not one escape!"

The three young men faced their enemies, determined to fight it out.

As the sailors ran toward them, the youths fired a volley.

It was followed by shouts and threats, but served to check the violent onslaught of the others, who now retaliated with a dropping fire.

Smoke filled the room, and made it impossible to see its breadth.

The three intrepid young men had dropped to the floor when the fusillade began, and the bullets flew over their heads, doing no injury. Then again they fired at the sailors of the Dragon, when they heard Springer cry:

"Stop it! Not another shot on your lives! I can see through the window that hundreds of citizens and soldiers are flocking toward this house alarmed at the reports of your weapons. Ha! who enters there?"

"The guards from below!" cried another voice, as the hall door was flung open, and a couple of men rushed into the room. "Fly! Fly for your lives!" continued the voice frantically. "The house is surrounded by hundreds who heard your pistols and are clamoring for admittance!"

"How are the doors?" roared Springer.

"All surrounded by the populace."

"Then take up the captain and get through the secret passage."

"But the men there—" commenced the man.

A perfect howl of fury escaped the cornered rascals.

"We cannot escape!" they cried, despairingly. "All the exits are under guard. Soon they will burst in the doors downstairs, then we are lost."

"No, no!" cried Springer. "Keep up your courage. See—the captain is not dead—he has simply fainted. We must not remain here passively!"

"Into the secret door!" whispered Joe. "We can fight our way out against an army. They are cornered here in a trap!"

"But Miss Brown—" began Springer, looking at the captain.

"As for her," said the other, with a shrug of his shoulders, "let her go."

They just had time to dash into the secret doorway, when they found the door closed. Joe seized the door and slammed it shut with a loud bang, just as the cornered men emerged from the smoke.

Another wild burst of fury roared from the rascals.

"We must hold the door, for they could hold a host at bay there. Oh, if there was only another exit."

"Ask the captain," said another. "He alone is acquainted with the secrets of this house."

"He is senseless!" was the despairing reply.

"And there goes the door down-stairs! They have burst it in!"

"Must we be captured this way?" cried another, in anguish of spirit.

"No!" exclaimed Springer. "Five of you go to the head of the stairs and prevent them ascending. Shoot down the first who braves you!"

"Hurrah!" cried the marines, as they rushed out in the hall.

Springer realized the extreme peril of their situation.

Bending down, he drew a flask of brandy from his pocket, and administered some to Redfield, just as a stentorian voice in the hall cried in bad Portuguese:

"Stand back! Get down those stairs, or we will fire on you."

"What is the cause of that disturbance?" demanded a voice, and this was followed by a roar and murmur, as if of thunder, from the populace.

"Keep back! We will tell you when we quell the trouble," responded the sailor. "If any of you come up here you may get injured in the fracas!"

"We demand to know the cause in the name of the emperor?"

"Then go to blazes and find out!"

A volley of stones was hurled at the crowd, which was succeeded by a stampede of feet as they retreated.

By this time Redfield had revived somewhat, and glanced at Springer.

"Well," he queried hoarsely. "Are they dead?"

"No. The city has besieged us—the woman is rescued. We must escape!"

"The secret passage by which we entered——"

"They hold it. We are caged. Is there no other avenue of escape?"

"Ay," replied the other, slowly. "But to gain it you must risk your life."

"Anything. To remain here longer is sheer madness."

"There is another secret passage behind that large picture on the wall there."

"Can we get out then——"

"Yes—but it leads to a huge hole in the cellar in which a boa-constrictor is confined. If you can kill the snake, on the other side of its den is another door which will lead you by a subterranean passage to the chapel of a monastery of the Dominicans."

"In the church, then, it will be easy to reach the street unobserved."

"We must risk it."

"But there is another consideration——"

"To what do you refer?"

"The costumes of the sailors will betray them."

"Never mind that. We must get away speedily, or fall in the prison-yard before a file of soldiers. And now—where is the treasure?"

"I have hidden it."

"Can we not take the box with us?"

"Let it remain in its place of concealment. It would be dangerous to expose it. We can return any time and secure it."

"You are right. By this time, Redfield, those down-stairs having seen our men will know who we are, and a guard will hold the door. A guard will be sent to the door. We must escape from this beastly town. Our best plan, therefore, is to get out of here and strive to kill the serpent. If we can pass it and reach the church, then, and only then, we can remain in concealment until we can get our arms and our treasure. I will advise you to go down-stairs and try to kill the serpent. I will advise you to go down-stairs and try to kill the serpent. I will advise you to go down-stairs and try to kill the serpent."

"Do not fail to take me with you."

"Are you badly injured?"

"I have a bullet in my body."

"What about the woman we held?"

"A hostage the hag is useless; therefore let her go."

"I will go down-stairs and try to kill the serpent. I will advise you to go down-stairs and try to kill the serpent. I will advise you to go down-stairs and try to kill the serpent."

of the stairs entered the hole in the wall, carrying Redfield with them, and leaving Matilda Brown lying on the floor of a closet, where they had carried her so that she could not betray the mode of their flight to their pursuers. Redfield was furious.

When all had vanished within the mouth of the passage the sailors in the hall fired a volley down the stairs, rushed after their companions, and, turning the picture on a pivot, the room the next moment presented a deserted appearance. When they reached the den of the serpent, and their lanterns disclosed the condition of the monster, they found all that remained of the marquis crushed to an unrecognizable mass in one corner.

He had met with a fate which he richly deserved.

At the instance of Springer the men fell upon the yet living body of the serpent and hacked it to piecemeal in order to prevent its thrashing doing them any further injury. Had there been any means of gaining access to the cellar over their heads, Redfield would have liked to have sent some of his men up the spiral staircase to attack Joe and his two friends from the rear; but there being no means of doing this, he bitterly vowed vengeance upon the youth, and bade them continue on, little dreaming that Lucy—alone, unprotected and trembling with fright—was crouching at the foot of the spiral stairs, in compliance with Joe's injunction, listening to all they said, and wondering where the voices came from. She feared every moment that they would discover her.

"But do as I suggest," she heard Springer say, "and you will have revenge."

"Ay!" cried Redfield. "I am helpless from that shot. Let us go on. We will make the monastery our headquarters, and from a hidden covert strike them in the back in the dark, which is the only way."

"Is the treasure safe in that building?"

"No one will suspect it is there, and it will be hard to find its hiding place."

"Suppose they discover this passage. What then?"

"They cannot. See—here is the door in this spot in the wall. Can you see it?"

"No—there are no signs of a door no matter how close I look."

"Yet it is here, nevertheless. The way to open it is to draw out this square stone—see? and put your arm in the hole, push the door out from the inside."

"Ah!—yes! It opens. We can now feel safe!"

In a few moments every sound died away, and the three men ran up the stairs again to seek Joe's protection. She reached the top just as the three men stepped into the room, and sprang in after them, much to their astonishment.

"As I said, they are gone!" cried Joe as they entered the room. "And Lucy, I told you——"

"Halt!" suddenly exclaimed a stern voice at this juncture.

"Hello!" cried Joe, in alarm. "What is this—some danger?"

"Hold up your hands!" cried the stern voice. "You are in a dangerous position!"

The speaker was a civil soldier, and behind him near the door in which appeared many faces was a file of guardsmen covering our friends with their carbines.

"Hold!" cried Captain Alvarez. "We are friends."

"Advance and show yourselves."

"Is it possible that you do not recognize me, colonel?"

"Why, bless me, it is Captain Alvarez, or am I dreaming?"

"Ay, and a tight corner we have been in."

"What has occurred? Why did you fire on us?"

"Let me explain, sir. You are laboring under a mistake. And thereupon he told the colonel all that occurred, and to his surprise."

While so doing, he pointed to the closet door, and released Matilda in the closet and at once released her.

"Then you are really the person I have been looking for?" asked the colonel.

"It was impossible, sir."

"Then there must be another mode of exit from here."

"And why did you come back?" Joe asked Lucy.

"Because those villains put me in the cellar."

She then told him what she heard.

"Children!" said Joe, when she concluded, "you can see it is useless to search this room for their mode of exit. The cellar is the place."

Joe remembered that Lucy had mentioned a stair, and he called across his mind that perhaps they were in the den of the boa. Communicating his suspicions to Alvarez, they all went down and secured evidence to show that there had been, in the den of the boa, a hidden passage. The condition of the unfortunate marquis did not surprise Joe any

He had left Juno up in the cellar, and when he returned, the boy was gone. Wondering what became of him he was about to go up-stairs, when the boy rushed into the cellar from the secret passage leading out to the inlet with every indication of mortal fear stamped on his dusky face.

"Oh, massa Joe," he cried, "sich news dis chile got. Oh, it's puffedly drefful!"

"What is the matter?" demanded Joe in alarm.

"De emperor tink yo' foolin' wid him, an' ain't got de treasure nor neber hab it, an' a hossifer am a-comin' to arrest us!"

"The deuce!" exclaimed Joe, blankly. "Where did you hear this?"

"Went out to the inlet, sah, an' heerd de hossifer talkin' to anodder feller on de bridge. Dar's been some tricks played. Seems dat Redfield am hid somewheres, an' he sen' a note to de emperor which say dat he, Redfield, get de treasure ter give it back, an' yo' stoled it, an' try fo' ter get away wid it, an' dat yo' lie 'bout de whole ting jist ter git a chance ter git away from heah. He say he 'tacked us in de house, an' yo' hid de diamonds, an' dat if de emperor beliebe yo' agin his word, den he am willin' ter go ter prison—dat Dom Pedro try him afore an' nebber fine him a dishones' man."

"Such deceit!" cried Joe. "Such roguery! Do you believe it, Mr. Alvarez?"

"Well," said the captain, coldly, "it is hard for me to judge who to believe. I formerly knew Mr. Redfield, and liked him—you, I never met before."

Joe was appalled at this unexpected turn of affairs.

"My friend," he said. "The fact of my coming here and making my disclosure to your emperor is ample proof of my sincerity. You are a gentleman. If it comes to the worst, until I prove my assertions can I trust you to protect Miss Travers?"

"You can rely upon my honor," said the guardsman, frankly.

At this moment there suddenly entered the cellar by the passage way a file of soldiers of the royal house guard, who formed in ranks on either side of the exit, and an officer with a paper in his hand approached Joe.

"It is my duty, sir," said he, "to arrest you. I have here a warrant from the emperor's own hands. Your vessel is now under guard in the bay."

"This is a ridiculous mistake, sir. Why is it ordered?" asked Joe.

"It is more serious than you imagine," replied the officer, "for this warrant is sworn at the instigation of certain information, and on the charge of the emperor's emissary who went to St. Thomas to arrest you some time ago!"

This man was Joe's enemy and he knew that he was in a serious predicament!

CHAPTER XV.

ESCAPE!

Joe and Juno were taken to prison and locked up in separate cells.

That they were in a serious position there was no doubt.

Ignorant of the laws of that strange country, with no real experience of the conditions in their favor and knowing the extent of the villainy of Alfred Redfield, and trembling for the safety of the two girls—their position was anything but an enviable one.

Royal Mortimer had been suspected of voluntarily abetting Pablo Hernandez in stealing the diamonds, and as the emissary of the emperor had received harsh treatment at the hands of Joe and Captain Hawkins, the young captain knew that, now that he was in the power of the Brazilian, he would, in his vengeful rage, strive to make a bad case against him by trying to prove him an accessory of his father's. This thought filled him with gloomy forebodings.

Toward the evening of the second day of his incarceration the jailer admitted Captain Alvarez to his cell.

The young guardsman seemed to be greatly surprised to see Joe.

"What is the matter with you?" he asked.

"I am here," said Joe, "because of the emperor's order."

"The emperor's order?" repeated the captain, "what order?"

"The order to arrest me," said Joe, "because of the diamonds."

"The diamonds?" repeated the captain, "what diamonds?"

"The diamonds that were stolen from the emperor," said Joe, "the diamonds that were stolen from the emperor."

As Joe asked this anxiously, Mr. Alvarez's face flushed.

"It is on her account I am here," he said.

"Ah, the dear girl has not forgotten me. Where is she, sir?"

"I kept my word. Both she and her tutor are at my house with my mother."

"You are very kind. I shall never be able to thank you enough."

"Mr. Mortimer," said the young soldier, rather abruptly, "did you ever hear of a man falling desperately in love with a girl whom he never can marry?"

"I have," replied Joe, surprised at this question. "Why, may I ask?"

"Because I have unfortunately done so."

"Indeed! Permit me to sympathize with you, sir."

"Save your sympathy," returned the other harshly. "I have every reason to hate you."

"Hate me?" cried Joe, now astounded. "I have never injured you."

"Truly; yet you have been the means of making my life wretched."

"I do not comprehend your allusion."

"A word will explain it. I love Lucy Travers!"

"You love Lucy Travers?" exclaimed Joe, starting.

"When I first met her, I fell passionately in love with her. You know how impulsive we South Americans are. I was charmed by her lovely face, her gracious manner and her noble spirit."

"Good heaven!" groaned Joe, turning pale. "And she is in your power!"

"Have no fears for her. I will do her no harm."

"Then you mean to get rid of me in order to gain her?"

"No, sir. You do not give me justice."

"Have I anything else to expect from you?"

"At unscrupulous hands, nothing else. I, however, am a man. I know how fondly she loves you. To see her in pain would kill me. To help you would please her, and to see her pleased I would die. Can you understand such mighty love as this?"

Joe looked at this young man in mute astonishment.

"What do you propose to do?" he asked at length.

"I will save you from death. The emissary of the emperor is a bitter man of strong prejudices, and would ultimately ruin you. Mark my word, if you remain here another day he will so exert his influence that you will be taken to the prison yard and shot. Redfield is his friend, and if they combine their machinations against you, you will be doomed."

"This is very bad," said Joe, thoughtfully. "What can I do?"

"If you comply with my wishes I will save you."

"By so doing would you imperil your own life?"

"Perhaps. Yet it may only be a deprivation of liberty—a prison for me."

"And you do this solely for Lucy's sake?"

"For her sake alone, although I have nothing to say against you."

"What do you want me to do?"

"Escape from this prison cell."

"Impossible! There are too many guards."

"Nevertheless, you can do it by changing clothing with me, taking the pass I carry, and adjust these false side-whiskers, which resemble my own."

"By so doing I would leave you exposed to danger."

"Never mind that. I can bear it."

"Oh, no! You are a noble fellow. I must refuse."

"Listen. You must do as I say. If you can wrest the box of gems from the thief it will exonerate me and yourself too."

"That is so. But is there no chance of detection?"

"Plenty. You cannot go out the main entrance, for all persons are very closely scrutinized while so doing, but must escape underground from the yard."

"How can that be done, sir?"

"Easily. After leaving here, you go across the square courtyard to the door. Beside it, in the yard, is a sentry box. Lift up a trap-door in the floor by the ring you will find there, and descend into a vaulted passage. It will lead you into the monastery of the Dominican fathers in the street behind the house in which we were attacked by Redfield. From there you can make your way to the street. After that it will depend upon your own discretion to evade arrest. If you can secure the treasure-box, and return it to the emperor, not only will I escape punishment, you vindicate your father and secure the release of your friends, but you will be grandly rewarded and bring me to a just punishment."

And when he finally consented

and

and

very much like his benefactor, the young sailor left the cell with the jailer when he came around. Alvarez lay on the cot, and was locked in.

The jailer left Joe in the square courtyard of the prison, on every side of which gleamed lights in the small iron-barred windows facing it.

There were several sentries pacing about, and as Joe glanced around with his heart wildly palpitating over the uncertainty of his detection, he saw the small guard-house standing beside the main door, of which Alvarez had spoken.

In order to reach it he was obliged to pass a guard; and even then he was in some doubt of his ability to get within the small inclosure.

Timidity would only prove detrimental, so he assumed an air of sang froid, and approaching the guard in the deepening twilight, he was challenged.

"Your pass, sir," exclaimed the soldier.

"It is here," replied the youth, presenting the piece of paper.

The man glanced at it, and then at Joe's costume.

"Are you the officer who entered a few minutes ago?" he asked.

"Yes—didn't you see my pass?"

"Me? Ah—what was it you said when you showed it?"

"I believe I did speak to you, but have forgotten what I said."

"Indeed! Are you sure it was me you spoke to?"

"Positive," falsified Joe. "I never make mistakes."

"I think, sir," said the guard, laying his hand on Joe's arm, "you had better come with me."

"Sir! You forget yourself. Is not my uniform guarantee that—"

"Never mind," quietly interrupted the other. "My suspicions of you warrant the chief warden to examine you, although your pass seems to be correct."

"This is outrageous. I do not understand it!" stammered Joe.

"Well," returned the other, grimly, "I am the relief guard, which was just changed, and have only been here a moment. My predecessor was almost a dwarf; therefore, as you say you spoke to me, you are under suspicion. The other man does not resemble me in the least respect."

Joe glanced swiftly about, and saw no one looking.

Then he suddenly grasped the sentry by the throat and bore him over on the ground.

In one minute he had strangled him into insensibility, and the moment the man was unconscious he hastily arose and dashed toward the sentry box.

No one saw him go in, and he found an iron ring in the floor, which he seized, and then he drew up a small trap-door. Down he went through the opening on a flight of stairs, closing the trap after him, and he found himself in a vaulted passage, which he pursued for fully quarter of a mile. Then he reached an obstruction in the darkness, which proved to be a door. He passed through and found himself at a triangle where two passages branched off.

Puzzled to know which one to follow, he finally decided upon the left-hand one, and then started off. Again he met with a door, which he thrust open, and closed after him. He was now in an open place. While moving about he fell over something, which, when he stooped to feel what it was, sent a cold shiver over him, as it felt cold and clammy like a round lump of flesh. Another open door was found, another passage—a flight of stairs, which he ascended a seemingly great distance, when he saw an opening ahead through which a light was gleaming.

Puzzled to know where he was, and fearful of discovery, he reached a square platform and stealthily crept forward toward the opening. One glance he flashed into the room before him, when to his utter astonishment he found that he was in the very house from which he had been arrested, and behind the huge picture, in the passage through which Redfield and his men escaped.

Night had now fallen, and the huge full moon was rising over the waters of the bay. Its mellow light came in through the iron-barred window and flooded the room with a ghastly radiance. And as Joe gazed in he saw the solitary moving figure of a man, gliding hither and thither in a strange manner, as if hunting for something. His head was bent, and he went first up one side, and then down the other, gliding softly along close to the wall as quietly as a ghost.

A single glance at his face when he turned brought a cry from Joe's lips.

The man started upright and glanced at Joe with a wild and tiger-like expression. The next instant, however, he suddenly stooped down and putting his fingers in a hole in the boards of the floor at his feet, he lifted a small piece of paper, dropped on his

knees, and inserting both hands in a cavity thus disclosed, he drew out the box of diamonds.

"Mine!" he cried, exultingly. "At last! I thought I would not find them! All mine! Once the chance offers to escape—but hark! What is that?"

It was the sound of distant voices approaching.

Joe glanced about in alarm. He knew not from whence they came.

Just then the man replaced the treasure and covered the hole again, while a look of anxious concern swept over his features. There were a pair of swords hanging on the wall, and he took them down, listened a moment, then threw them on the floor, probably thinking he would have no use for them.

Joe sprang into the room and seized one.

"Ha!" cried the startled man, recoiling. "Who is this?"

"You will see!" was Joe's grim reply. "I have you alone at last, Alfred Redfield!"

"What! You? Escaped from prison? Here?" hoarsely cried the other.

"Ay! and I will force you to disgorge!"

The man grasped the other sword, uttering a horrible malediction.

"You shall not leave this place alive!" he roared.

He was wounded and half disabled by Joe's pistol yet, but his fury lent him artificial strength, and with the ferocity of a maddened beast he attacked the youth.

In the bright moonlight, which slanted into the room upon them, their swords clashed as they fenced in a frenzied endeavor to pierce each other's heart with their flashing blades. It was a dreadful conflict, and they fought with wild energy.

But Redfield's strength waned and he grew weaker. His sword was knocked from his hand, he uttered a heartrending groan, and he fell to the floor at Joe's mercy.

The youth, with a cry of joy, rushed upon him, planted his foot upon his fallen enemy's chest, and pointed his gleaming blade at Redfield's throat, when there came a wild shout, the pounding of feet, and a dozen of the rascal's crew rushed into the room from the secret passage.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MONASTERY.

When Redfield's men rushed into the room after their captain fell, Joe left the prostrate rascal, and getting the wall behind him so that they could not attack him from the rear, and taking a firmer clutch upon the sword, he prepared for a severe contest. If once captured, he knew that he could expect no mercy from his cousin. The men were half a dozen in number, with Springer at their head. They did not pause at the defiant attitude the youth assumed, but rushed upon him in a body.

Although Joe kept them at arm's length with his sword, they separated, and while one party engaged his attention, the others fell upon him, and disarmed the brave youth. He was knocked down after a lively scuffle, and they bound him hand and foot. Then they carried him and Redfield through the secret passages to a huge cellar, which he correctly surmised was beneath the monastery. It was a damp, stifling place, composed of a corridor on each side of which were a number of iron-barred cells.

Thrusting him into one of these, they left him to his fate.

No sooner were they gone, however, when the sound of approaching footsteps caught his ear, and he heard some one stop before his cell door.

"Have you done anything?" he heard a whispered query in the darkness.

"No," replied Joe, wondering what was meant by this question.

"But I heard them stop here, from my place of concealment."

"They did," returned Joe, more puzzled than before. "I was bound and locked in here."

"I invoke the hatred of my patron saint upon the sacrilegious fiends!" said a strange man's voice, "but thank fortune, I can liberate you."

"Have you the keys?" queried Joe.

"Ay. Was I not the keeper of the archives?"

"Then help me at once."

"Where are the keys?"

"I will find them," replied the man, understanding him.

"Well, you will find them," said Joe, "but I'll wait for you."

The man opened the door of a cell, took a key from the lock, then

approached Joe's cell, and as he entered the cell, he said to Joe, "If they have no keys, they can only open the

"But you?" asked Joe, humoring the mystery at random.

"Did I not tell you how I escaped? When they committed the outrage, I evaded their observation in the wine-cellar where I hid. Then I knew what was meant by the marauders' invasion. The wealth of our church was known and they desired to get it. Happily I was free to stealthily remove it to a secure place, and when after that they discovered it was gone from the treasury, their rage knew no bounds. For two days I have eaten nothing. I have a holy trust. I must liberate the priests. This I might have done sooner could I have secured the keys, for, I know that they will starve to death in their cells."

"This was one of the priests," thought Joe.

He reached the side of the youth and began to cut his bonds.

Suddenly he stopped, uttering a suppressed cry of surprise.

"You are not a holy friar!" he exclaimed.

"I know it," returned Joe arising, free of the ropes which held him.

The Virgin Mother help me. It is an enemy."

"Contrarily, sir. I am a friend."

"Explain yourself," came the suspicious reply.

Joe did so in as few words as possible, omitting the story of his arrest.

When he concluded the priest grasped his hand.

"I believe you," he said. "And I will liberate them."

"How did this happen?" asked Joe, as they left the cell together.

"After mass, the church was very quiet," said the priest, "when we adjourned to the dining-room to partake of our matutinal meal. While thus engaged a band of sailors entered and threatened our lives if we uttered a cry. Forced to comply, we were bound. In an unguarded moment I escaped to the wine-cellar. The others of our order were imprisoned, and the scamps took possession of our vestments and holy articles of office. Since then they have been personating us for two days, saying masses and conducting the church after a certain manner, which although not correct, is so well imitated as to delude the congregation."

"Well, I swear!" muttered Joe. "Such imposture is unparalleled!"

"Here are the others!" suddenly exclaimed the priest.

They paused before a cell, opened by a priest, who led them to a small place where several divines who were huddled in the small place like so much cattle. Their joy knew no bounds at their deliverance, and under Joe's guidance one by one they found the secret passages. He soon returned, however, saying that it was impossible to get out of the church by the secret of opening it.

"There is then," said Joe, "but one way to escape, through the monastery."

"Horror!" cried a priest in dismay. "They will kill us!"

"Nonsense. Have none of you weapons?"

"Alas no! Nor could we use them if we had."

"Well, they are arms!" said Joe, "then let us die!"

"In that case, let us die here saying a mass for our soul's salvation."

"If one of you will guide me," said Joe, "I will reconnoitre the ground."

A priest expressed his willingness to act as guide, and together they went upon a flight of stone stairs. Passing through a door, Joe found himself in a broad hall with a marble floor. The moon was still high in the heavens, and its light fell through several windows on the left hand side, making the corridor as light as day. By its light he saw a man in the garb of a priest sitting by a door at the end of the hall. The priest with Joe told him that he was a prisoner, and that the man was the guard. He then refused to go any further, and returned to the cellar, leaving Joe alone. The youth from the obscurity of the cellar doorway gazed at the guard reflectively. It was necessary to silence that man in order to gain the church if he wished to escape, was very evident. There were voices sounding in an adjoining room, which was separated from the hall by a partition, and as Joe heard his own name mentioned amidst a burst of laughter, his curiosity was aroused to hear what was said. Watching his chance while the head of the guard at the door dropped, he suddenly darted from the cellar doorway and flitted across the hall. He might have been mistaken, but just then it seemed to him that the guard saw him, and he turned his head, and dashed a quick look at his prisoner. When, however, he gained the recess in which he was standing, and peeped back, the man was apparently dead.

"And will his royal highness come, is the question," asked a voice from the other side of the partition, which Joe recognized as that of one of Redfield's men.

"Of course," replied the voice of Springer. "A nice turn we can give this trouble we're in, and then we can get away on the Dragon which, I learn, not only has been seized by the government, but they are at present provisioning and arming her with guns; in a word, making a coast-cruiser of her. She is to sail in two days."

"Splendid," returned the other. "And her crew?"

"Are all in the palace, and we expect them to mass to-night."

"Unaccompanied?"

"Ay, and in costume."

"And your plan?"

"Capture every one—imprison them—substitute our men and escape without detection."

"Splendid! Nothing could be finer."

"And now, about the boy."

"Have you sent for the emperor?"

"Over an hour ago. The messenger has returned."

"To hear the boy confess?" laughed the other.

"Yes. It is now a quarter of ten."

"Then we will fetch him up."

Joe parted the curtains and peered into the room.

Redfield's men were shaved, wore the garbs of priests, and to more fully carry out the deception, like all southern priests, in the center of the crown of their heads was a round spot.

The walls were of dark wood, upon which hung numerous pictures of the emperor. In the center of the wall was a small round hole in the wall.

Joe was looking over these apertures, and speculating over their use, a heavy hand came down upon his arm, and a voice exclaimed in English:

"By the demon o' darkness, I've got ye!"

He turned around and found himself a prisoner in the hands of the man who had been dozing at the chapel door.

"What's the matter?" asked the man.

"I've got ye!" said the man.

"What's the matter?" asked Springer, running out in alarm. "What's the matter. He was followed by the rest of the crew."

"This lad got free somehow," said Joe's captor. "I was a-watchin' him as he came up from the cellar, he a-thinkin' I was asleep all the time, and he playing possum on him as nice as you please."

At this moment there sounded the loud intonation of a gong in the hall.

"The emperor has come!" exclaimed one of the men.

"Then in with him!" said the first-mate. "Into this room with him."

They caught hold of Joe, and hustled him into the room.

"Now, then," said Springer, seating himself near Joe, "scatter all the things you can find. One of you conduct the emperor into the next room behind that curtain, where he can hear all that passes in here. Bring the writing materials?"

One man put a pen, ink-stand and paper upon the table, and another brought a chair, and he next vanished into the hall.

"What is the meaning of this, may I ask?" queried Joe, uneasily.

"Just look at those holes under the pictures on the walls? What do you see?"

"Inside of them are objects resembling pistol barrels," said Joe, after a survey.

"Right. A man is behind each opening, and the cocked revolver of each one covers you."

"What is this for?"

"I expect the emperor here in a moment. We have informed him that you have escaped from jail, and are in our power, ready to confess your crime of having stolen the box of diamonds from Mr. Redfield to appropriate it to your own use. The emperor will remain in the next room, concealed from observation behind yonder curtain, to see and hear all that passes. Taking your diction from me, you will accuse yourself of the theft, and exonerate us."

"I refuse to do anything of the kind!" exclaimed Joe, angrily.

"In that case, we will certainly kill you. Completely at our mercy as you are, be wise, and accede. At the first sign of treachery, my men, who will be watching you, will pull the triggers of their weapons, and you die where you sit—"

"The emperor will protect me, he has a guard—"

"He is alone, so dissuade yourself of that idea. Ha! Some one is coming. Remember, we realize the risk of this trick, and we will have us. I am supposed to be your confessor!"

Joe's captor entered the next room at once, making a motion to Redfield's men to follow him, and making a motion to Redfield's men to follow him, and making a motion to Redfield's men to follow him.

CHAPTER XVII.

AT LAST!

While Joe was engaging the attention of Springer and his men, the priest who had liberated him came up in the hall, and seeing that the coast was clear, he swiftly made his way to the chapel, and thence to the street.

After the spy came in and went out, the first mate changed the intonation of his voice, as he noticed the curtain flutter, behind which sat the emperor, and assuming a most docile air, while his eyes gleamed dangerously at Joe, he asked:

"And are you ready to tell me all, my erring son?"

It was a hard job to get his forced part, but Joe realized the fatal alternative.

"I am!" he replied, in choking tones.

"You said you stole those diamonds, didn't you?"

"I did!" groaned Joe.

"And you intended to not only rob Mr. Redfield, but also the emperor?"

"Yes," was the gasping reply.

"Are you not willing to make out an affidavit according to the facts?"

"Isn't what I told you sufficient?"

"No, my son, I can give you absolution, but the emperor must regain his own property. When you finish your confession you will restore the diamonds, won't you?"

"Yes, sir," said Joe, with the perspiration bursting out all over him.

"Did you not conceal the box?"

"I did."

"And you will tell me where it is?"

Once—twice—thrice the boy essayed to reply; he could not.

There was a peculiarity about his position at once strange and terrible. Yet his blood boiled—he became blinded for a moment to his real danger, and he absolutely refused to speak. There was a menacing look in Springer's eyes as he nervously toyed with his handkerchief, and hoarsely whispered:

"Speak! If you do not, I will drop this handkerchief, when the men will fire!"

"Death before dishonor!" exclaimed Joe, suddenly springing up.

He caught hold of Springer, and dragged him to the wall, just as a wild, sullen roar echoed throughout the building, like a herd of angry lions—a strange, unearthly sound, which chilled Springer's blood.

"Not another word, you hound!" cried the infuriated boy, "not another word! I will expose you. I am forced to this confession! Ha! The curtain parts—the emperor stands revealed in its folds!"

"Release me!" cried Springer, in horrified tones.

"No, no! Oh, scoundrel, let your villainy rebound upon your own head! I stole no diamonds. I was bringing them to the emperor. You, Redfield, and your dastardly crew are the authors of the crime. I denounce you! I know where the jewels are hidden. I shall secure them. I will keep my mission!"

The emperor stepped into the room, an alarmed look upon his face.

"Desist!" he cried, holding up his hand. "What means this scene?"

"Back, back, Dom Pedro!" cried Joe, wildly. "A dozen concealed weapons in the walls are bent upon us. Retreat, ere these disguised scoundrels take your life!"

And even as he spoke there came a blaze of fire all along each wall, followed by the startling reports of the revolvers, and a dozen bullets crashed about Joe.

A frightful shriek burst from Springer's lips, as, when the first intimation came, Joe swung him around to protect himself, and the first mate's body received several of the bullets designed for him. The emperor had retreated, but the next moment hundreds of people rushed in, led by the priest who had escaped, and as they filled the room, Joe let the body of the first mate fall to the floor.

Springer was badly wounded, and lay there groaning in frightful agony.

"They were here!" cried the priest. "Sacrilegious rascals that they were. Bar every exit, and let not one escape your just fury at their defilement of the house of God!"

But the rascals all made good their escape except Springer, and it was never after known accurately what became of him in the midst of that furious mob. In the meantime, Joe went into the next room, and then saw the emperor sitting at a table surrounded by several soldiers.

"I have been duped," said the emperor, "by artful rascals."

"If you will come with me at once, I will show you the diamonds, sir."

"Do you know where they are?"

"By way of the subterranean passages is dangerous, though."

"My carriage awaits me. Can we use it?"

"If you please. But bring a guard."

Soldiers were summoned, and Joe entered the emperor's carriage with him and the colonel, when they were driven around to the next street.

Entering the old building with the emperor and several of the soldiers, the rest remaining on guard downstairs, Joe proceeded to the room in which he had encountered Redfield. As he and the emperor entered they saw Redfield on his knees over the hole in the floor in which the treasure was concealed. He heard them—he sprang to his feet—a cry of terror and mortification escaped him upon seeing who they were, and before they could intercept him he dashed into one of the secret passages, leaving the box of diamonds which he had just drawn from their place of concealment with the obvious intention of taking them away, upon the floor beside the hole.

Two soldiers pursued him, but he was not captured.

The emperor picked up the box, and looked at its contents.

"You have done nobly," said he, looking at Joe. "Forgive my unjust suspicions of you, as they were incited by the emissary who was sent to apprehend your father. I have since learned that not only was he in league with Alfred Redfield, but Captain Alvarez saw him assisting in holding a helpless woman in this room. Moreover, I have read the paper which you left with me when you called at the palace upon your arrival in this country, and let me assure you that I am not only convinced of the innocence of your father, but am sure he was a victim of circumstances and the black slave, Pablo Hernandez."

"I thank you, sir, but wish no remuneration for doing my duty."

"Nevertheless, you must accept from me a token ere you go. To-morrow morning you will find upon the table in the cabin of your yacht a small present which it is my wish to give you. In the meantime, let me proffer to you the hospitality of my palace."

"Sir, I deeply, gratefully thank you. I have an engagement to-night."

"How is that?" asked the emperor in surprise.

"Miss Travers."

"Oh," said the emperor, with a short laugh.

"And my crew—"

"They are all liberated."

"Then, sir, I wish you good-by. I will sail to-morrow."

The emperor cordially shook hands with him, and went out, the colonel carrying the deep sea treasure in his hands, and a strong guard surrounding them. Joe followed, and as he left the room there came a smothered malediction from behind the walls, and Redfield came into the room.

"Thwarted!" he muttered in furious tones. "But I will have vengeance upon the whelp! Now, with my men all on board the Dragon, in disguise of the men Dom Pedro designed to sail her, whom they met and overcame upon their escape from the monastery, we will make you dearly pay for the excessive trouble to which you put us, Joe Mortimer! Cheated out of that fortune as I am, I yet have one aim in future, and that to gain Lucy Travers. I know where she is now abiding, and will fly there at once, before he can meet her. Once she is lured from the house of Alvarez's parents, and in my power again, I'll defy the powers of darkness to wrest her from my clutches!"

And as he uttered this threat, his dark eyes agleam with wicked rage, he left the house, and entering a carriage, was rapidly driven away.

When Joe reached the house in which Lucy had been living, he met with a startling surprise. They told him that a soldier came from the palace of the emperor with a note from him (Joe) saying that she was wanted at the palace at once. It did not require much discernment for Joe to see the hand of Redfield in this artful piece of treachery.

His first course was to hurry to militia headquarters and send out an alarm, in response to which thousands of soldiers were sent in all speed scouring the city from one end to the other.

He waited anxiously at the arsenal for a report, and after an hour learned that the carriage in which the girl departed had gone toward the bay. Thither he hurried, and just as he reached the water's edge, he heard the boom of a gun from the fortifications.

It was answered soon after by a thunderous report which seemed to come from the deck of a black vessel gliding toward the entrance, which he recognized in a moment as the Dragon. Men were to be seen hurrying hither and thither hoisting sail, and in a few minutes every inch of canvas she could hold was swelled from her two masts like mighty clouds of virgin snow.

"They are all on board of her," muttered Joe, despairingly, "and no doubt— Ha! There she is now, struggling and

screaming in Redfield's clutches at the cabin door. Heaven help her!"

He saw a boatman near by, and hired him to take him out to the Nymph. Joe was on board of his beautiful yacht in a few moments.

Every one of his sailors were on board, and a word explained the situation.

"We must pursue him," he cried, "and rescue Miss Travers and Miss Brown!"

Just then Juno came out of the cabin with a package in his hands.

"What is that?" queried Joe.

"De emperor, sah, sen' it to you jes now, an' say yo' keep it fo' a present."

Joe tore off the paper, and a cry of surprise escaped him.

For the present was the deep sea treasure, in the box yet in which it had been taken from the cabin of the Venus.

It was accompanied by a note.

CHAPTER XVIII.

OVER THE ROLLING SEA AGAIN.

The note from the emperor was brief, and said:

"I recognize your faithful service, and hereby return the deep sea treasure as a token of my approbation. The box and contents are intact save that I have taken one stone, which I will have cut and set in remembrance of the event. May God bless your life. PEDRO II."

When Joe finished reading the note he glanced about the Nymph in surprise.

She had been newly painted, varnished and put in perfect order.

Besides the two small guns she carried were two more of larger calibre.

"Who did this, Bob?" he demanded of his old sailing-master.

"The emperor," replied the sailor, who held the tiller. "Ship-stores, water, and Lord only knows what not. Faith, we're loaded to the bulwarks, sir."

Joe said nothing; he was overwhelmed by Dom Pedro's kindness.

They passed out of the bay, and far away on the restless ocean descried the flying bark making fully twelve knots an hour. It made Joe nervous and fidgety. He gazed at the main-sheet, then at the pennant, then at the jibs, and then ordered the sheets trimmed closer.

The wind was blowing a half gale, and the Nymph was making good time.

Joe went into the pretty little cabin and ignited a cigar and put the treasure in its former compartment.

Then he came out. He was restless—impatient. Again he gazed at the canvas.

"This is a reeking breeze, sir," said Bob.

"Well, if the Dragon can stand full sail we can. Besides, with our stores we have more ballast, which adds to her ableness just now."

The tremendous top-sail was bent, and the Nymph rushed through the lumpy brine with her port rails half submerged. It seemed as if those clouds of canvas would burst from the yards, which were creaking, groaning and snapping under the tremendous pressure which the wind brought upon them.

Several hours passed by, the yacht gaining steadily upon the flying bark.

"What do you mean?"

"Jist cast yer eyes astern, sir."

"By heavens—a fog rolling up!"

"Ay, sir, an' afore we can get in gun range it'll be about us."

"That is too bad," cried Joe, despairingly. "Only one league separates us now."

"An' he may double on us in the fog."

As predicted by Bob.

In half an hour they were enveloped in a thick mist.

There was no determining when it would clear away, and as hunting for the Dragon in its midst was a risky task, extra sails were taken down and the yacht reached along north and by northeast and a dingy working rig.

Unfortunately the fog only lifted momentarily during the day, and when night came, it settled down more densely than before.

Joe could have cried with vexation, as he feared that his enemy would escape him after all. After the men had all attended to their various posts, Joe summoned every man on deck, and ordered Juno to bring the diamonds out.

When they all stood expectantly on the port side in a file, wondering why they were called, Joe uncovered the box in the skylight, and pointing to its contents, he said:

"You have all been very faithful to me throughout this cruise, and having been paid your salaries in advance, I owe you nothing. However, not one of you shall regret standing by me in my hours of need. Every one of you know the object of this cruise, and moreover, are aware that the Emperor of Brazil made me a present of these diamonds after they were returned to him. They represent, as you can see, a large fortune. Now, in order to secure your best will and hearty co-operation in rescuing the two ladies from the power of the rascal who commands the Dragon, I am going to make you all a proposition. It is, that if you all serve me as faithfully in the future as you have done in the past, that I will, upon again reaching civilization, sell these diamonds, and the net proceeds of the sale will be equally divided among us—each one to get his proportional part in money."

"Hurrah—hurrah for Captain Joe!" cried the delighted men, vociferously.

"By this means," said Joe, "you will make my interests your own, and in the end every man Jack of you will, when ashore, find himself very wealthy."

"Ay, ay," cried the sailors; "we will stand by you. We will fight for you, and we will save the ladies—God bless 'em!"

The diamonds were returned to the cabin, and when the sailors resumed their quarters Joe was thoroughly convinced that Redfield would stand a bad chance if he once fell into their clutches. Then he retired for the night.

He was up bright and early the next morning, and took an observation as soon as possible. The yacht had made nearly five hundred miles, and he considered their position to be at a point between Rio and Bahia, fifty miles off the coast.

It was a clear day, with no indication of the fog nor of the Dragon.

A coasting schooner was sighted, however, and as the breeze held good Joe determined to hail the stranger, which was coming down the coast under full sail. The course of the Nymph was accordingly changed, and several hours later came up in the wind near the schooner.

"Ahoy, there!" cried Joe to the men on her deck.

"Ahoy!" came the reply, in good English.

"Did you pass a bark, under full sail, bound north?"

"Ay, a black vessel," shouted the man on the schooner; "name of Dragon."

"That is the one. How was she heading?"

"Due north, for Cape Saint Roque, four or five hours ago."

"Did he speak you?"

"No, sir. Seemed in too great a hurry."

Joe thanked the man, and the vessels having drifted far apart by this time, all sail was crowded on, and away went the sloop at a tremendous pace.

At the cape they learned that the Dragon was only two hours ahead of them, heading westward toward Grenada Island. Convinced that Redfield would stop there, Joe at once laid his course for the island, and under the impetus of a free wind and a mountain of canvas, bulging main and club-top sails, spinnaker and an enormous balloon jib, the Nymph raced through the ocean's curling billows like a thing of life, and merged into the Caribbean Sea once more. Toward nightfall there loomed up in the distance a faint shadow, and when it was sighted, Joe came on deck.

"They are the mountains, Jack," said he to the sailor at the tiller, "which run the whole twenty-five miles length of Grenada Island, and that huge peak which stands out in bold relief is Mount St. Catharine. Those hills below are the lateral spurs it throws off at less elevation."

"How'll we bear, sir? Fur Saint George, on ther west'ard coast?"

"No. Not yet, at least. The Dragon cannot have reached port, so we'll strike the southern coast before running west."

Several hours later they were close to the island, keeping along shore.

The night was coming on black and threatening, and Joe concluded it best to seek an anchorage until morning, as he had no desire to be blown out to sea again. Consequently a sharp lookout was kept for a harbor, and just as the darkness began to enshroud everything a beacon was descried.

The coast was rocky and dangerous, and when they drew nearer other distinguishing lights were made out, which led Joe to correctly surmise that they were close to the harbor.

There was nothing to fear except safely getting in, from the inhabitants of this island, the capital of which is the central station and coal depot of British West Indian mail steamers. The population was over 33,000, only one-tenth of whom were white—the rest free Africans, and all governed by a lieutenant-governor, a council and legislative assembly. Therefore, if it were a village they were approaching, it must comprise white and black friends. The forestay-sail was lowered, and as the bowsprit was pointed in toward the twinkling lights on shore, a small but clumsy rowboat came alongside containing a negro, who offered to pilot the Nymph to an anchorage. His services were thankfully accepted, and shortly thereafter they were close to the shore behind a rocky bluff amid some other vessels, when, after paying the negro, he got in his boat just as the anchor went down, and he vanished.

"Don't like the looks o' that coon," exclaimed Bob, reflectively, when he was gone.

"Just what I was thinking," said Joe. "Such a surly face I never saw before, and I had half a notion that he was a disguised white man. Twice while I stood in the bow I had to call to the quartermaster to luff up, or we would have run on the jagged rocks, while the negro merely laughed at me."

At this moment a large boat came alongside, and made fast under the lantern on the starboard side, when Joe was surprised to see that it was filled with men in the garb of soldiers of the British army.

They came upon the deck, fully armed, and a man in the garb of an officer approached Joe, and tapped him on the shoulder.

"You are my prisoner, sir," said he, blandly.

Joe looked at the dark, full-bearded man in intense surprise.

"What do you mean, sir?" he stammered.

"I am informed that you are from Rio Janeiro?"

"I left there some time ago."

"Then I am not mistaken. In the name of her majesty the Queen, you are under arrest, and must come ashore with me for examination."

"Very well," said Joe, quietly, and at a loss to understand why he was arrested.

He whispered something to Juno, and a moment later accompanied the officer to his boat. He entered it, followed by the soldiers, and the next moment they were pulled toward the dark shore.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE VILLAGE.

A moment after Joe was gone Juno turned to Bob Ballast.

"See heah, Bob," said he. "Dar's treachery heah."

"Wot's that?" demanded the old sailor.

"Dat pilot warn't no cullud man."

"What was he, then?"

"A white man, sah. I seed him by de binnacle light, an' dem fellers wot jes' tuck Captain Joe away am 'spicious ter dis chile."

"Wot in thunder can we do about it, lad?"

"Joe telled me you arm de men an' foller dem. Go to de willage, an' 'quire wha' de mattah. We didn't do nuffin' wrong, did we?"

Bob was quick to act. He scented danger, and at once carried out Joe's instructions. Taking six men, fully armed, he left a guard of three sailors on deck with orders to keep a sharp lookout, and entering the two boats, they rowed toward the shore. When they reached a point midway between the Nymph and the village they encountered a vessel at anchor.

Juno sat next to Bob, and the little colored boy almost turned pale.

"Massa Bob!" he muttered, as they passed under the stern of the vessel, "de Lawd sabe Massa Joe now, for heah am de Dragon!"

"What! The Dragon! Hold hard, boys!" cried Bob.

He stopped the other boat, and both made fast to the bark.

A moment later they swarmed up on deck. It presented a deserted appearance, but they found two men on watch forward.

A scuffle ensued, when they were overpowered and bound.

"An' now," said Bob, determinedly, to one of the men, and he pointed his revolver at the sailor's head to emphasize his command, "I want ye to own up truthfully, you beller, or by the holy smoke I'll blow your finger-head off. Where's the rest o' ther crew?"

"Gone ashore," surlily replied the man, who was lying on the deck.

"An' the ladies?"

"They are with 'em."

"Who was the nigger wot piloted us in?"

"I dunno."

"You lie! Speak—the truth!"

"It was me."

"I thought so. Some o' the burnt cork's on yer cheeks yet. An' now——"

"Well—what do you want?"

"Explain who them men in soger clothes was."

"I don't know what you mean."

At this juncture one of Bob's men came up from the fore-castle with something in his hand, and joined the group just as the last question was asked.

"See here," he said. "I guess this'll explain it, Bob."

In his hand was a British soldier's red coat.

"Ah!" cried the old salt. "So it was them, eh?"

"Blame me," said the captive sailor, grumblingly, "if I knows wot yer mean."

"Didn't Redfield an' his men put on such suits as these?"

"Ay. But I didn't know what for."

"An' didn't Redfield wear a false beard?"

"He did; an' he left this vessel half an hour ago."

"Did he take the ladies first, or come back fer 'em?"

"When they put on their soldiers' suits they took the ladies with 'em."

"Sayin' they was a-goin' ashore, or where?"

"Redfield says he was a-goin' ashore to marry the gal."

"Did she receive any ill treatment since she was abducted from Rio?"

"Some. He tried ter make love to her, but had to fight it out. The gal's a reg'lar spitfire in spite o' her looks, an' held her own bravely."

"Good fer ther lass!" Bob could not help exclaiming. "An' the other?"

"She's wi' Miss Travers."

"When did you arrive here, an' how did yer know we was a-comin' in?"

"Came to anchor two hours ago. Redfield knew as yer was a-follyin' him, an' seein' the storm comin', knowed you'd try ter find a harbor. An' this willage bein' the nearest in your course if yer came this way, he sent me out in a boat ter watch. If I foun' yer, and could drive the yacht on the rocks an' sink her, he was ter gi' me a hundred dollars."

Bob had the vessel searched, but no one save the two sailors was on board; so, locking them down in the fore-castle, while Juno unperceived spiked the heavy guns with which the Dragon had been equipped, they left the vessel and rowed to the shore.

In the meantime Joe had not gone far from the Nymph in the hands of the apparent soldiers when he was seized from behind and overcome. He then learned who his captors were, and his rage knew no bounds.

And to augment his anguish he discovered that the two girls were also bound captives with him in the same boat.

They rowed to the shore, disembarked, and Redfield sent one of the men to reconnoiter the village. When he returned he said it consisted of about fifty huts, used as habitations and stores.

Among them was an inn kept by a ruffianly-looking Englishman, who had a bad reputation, and this point suiting Redfield's convenience, he ordered the prisoners carried there at once by a roundabout way in order to meet no trouble with the villagers, who were mostly honest, hard-working people.

Redfield went ahead with a couple of his men, and entering the saloon, he quickly took its keeper into his confidence, backing up his request for help with a goodly sum.

The man was only too eager, and said he had a few good horses in a shed in the back of his saloon which Redfield could use to send to St. George for a minister to wed him to Lucy. There was an apartment in the back of the saloon, roughly furnished, and when the three prisoners arrived they were carried into this room and huddled in a corner.

There was a window near them, but as they were securely bound and gagged, no apprehensions were felt of their escape. When his prisoners were secured, Redfield sent back seven of his men under Springer to the Dragon with orders to go on board the Nymph as soon as an opportunity occurred and scuttle her.

He retained three of his men, and one of these he sent away to the city with a note on one of the tavern-keeper's horses.

Then he ordered the Englishman to close up his door, and as soon as it was done the two girls were dragged out into the saloon and he began to taunt Lucy on her helpless condition and the speedy approach of their nuptials.

He imbibed a good deal of the vile liquor the Englishman sold, with the sailor and the inn-keeper, until it got to his head.

In the meantime Juno had gone ahead of the rest of the crew, and when Redfield saw the apparent soldiers on the shore from the saloon.

When they were gone he made a circuit of the building, feeling positive that his young captain was near by. It did not take him long to discover the window in the back of the house, and he opened it cautiously and peered in. There was no light, so he guardedly ignited a match, and when its tiny flame lit up the interior of the room he saw Joe.

A moment later the young captain was liberated, and his own arms having been taken from him, he took one of Juno's pistols, and they crept toward the door separating the apartment from the barroom. They could easily distinguish all that was said in the other room, and the taunts and insults Redfield made Lucy suffer made Joe frantic.

He did not reckon what odds he had to contend against, but he knew that Juno was with him, and would help him out.

It therefore was just as Redfield was laughing loudest and happiest over his success, that Joe burst the door violently open, and followed by Juno, sprang into the room, crying furiously:

"Your success will be of short duration, you coward!"

The double clicking of the revolvers in the hands of the two courageous boys brought Redfield to a sense of his peril, and he sprang to his feet and confronted—a pair of gleaming revolvers!

CHAPTER XX.

A FRIGHTFUL STRUGGLE.

Redfield was surprised to find himself menaced by Juno and Joe, but the rascal did not lose his wits. Contrarily, his peril seemed to sober him, and with flashing eyes he sprang up.

"Fire upon these whelps!" he cried to his two sailors.

The men drew their weapons, but before they could use them the Englishman caught up a huge cudgel, and, with a roar like a lion, jumped toward the two daring boys.

Juno aimed at him, but before he could fire the inn-keeper struck the boy such a frightful blow on the head that he was sent reeling across the room and fell to the floor in a half senseless condition.

Joe was maddened at his brutal action, and shot the burly wretch.

When he turned again toward Redfield he saw the wretch, with Lucy in his arms, flying out of the door.

Twice Joe's revolver was discharged, and both of Redfield's men fell.

Then the young captain sprang over their bodies and rushed after his mortal enemy.

He was guided solely by the sound of Redfield's footsteps.

A moment later, and just as the aroused villagers came running to the scene, he saw his cousin, mounted on a horse and holding Lucy before him, dashing by!

It took Joe but an instant to reach the stable and procure another beast, and away he went in pursuit of the other like the wind.

He knew not, nor did he care, where he was going, so long as he could hear the flying footfalls of the horse ahead which Redfield bestrode.

On, on, on through the inky darkness he dashed, listening intently, his heart throbbing with feverish emotion for the safety of poor Lucy, whom the rascal seemed determined to retain.

Joe prayed for light, as the darkness was intense, and, to his joy, the impending storm soon after began to display its harbingers in the form of faint streaks of lightning, which momentarily increased, and as it grew more vivid he descried the fugitive ahead, urging on the horse he bestrode with the lash, until the poor animal reeked with lather.

It was a rough, uncertain road, abruptly ascending the mountains, for the island is no more than twelve miles wide.

From his elevation Joe could see in the momentary flashes of light the glinting waters of the Great Buolet, Duquesne, the Antoine and the St. John's rivers, while here and there the jagged rocks were broken by timber, bushes and low grasses. It seemed as if he did not gain much on his enemy, and when they had gone up the rugged road to a height of 1,700 feet above the level of the sea they suddenly came upon a lake almost circular in form, about two and one-half miles in circumference. The grandeur of scenery was awe-inspiring. The plateaus were level, and once his animal had a sure footing Joe urged him on at the top of his speed.

Just then a wild shriek pealed out from the lips of Lucy that rang and echoed over the lake wildly. Nearer and nearer Joe drew to the other, until Redfield himself ran out on a plateau on a cliff towering high above the dark waters of the lake.

The horse was going at a high rate of speed, and Redfield had just time to spring from its back with the girl, when the

poor beast, uttering an almost human neigh of terror, rushed off the top of the cliff and plunged down to the dark waters below.

A wild shout of joy burst from Joe's lips, and he saw Redfield glance back at him with a wildly anxious look on his dark face. The rascal yet wore the costume of a British army officer, and his form stood boldly outlined in it before the now almost incessant playing of the lightning. He had a sword at his side and a revolver in its case hanging from his belt.

Thunder now was rolling and muttering in the distance, and the whole scene was one at once dramatic and awe-inspiring.

Joe dashed up to the plateau a moment after Redfield lost his horse, and drawing rein, he sprang to the ground.

"At last!" cried Joe, wild with joy, "you can no longer elude me, you inhuman wretch, and the hour has come when one or the other of us can cry quits! Drop that girl, or I will shoot you down!"

"So!" sneered the other disdainfully, as he dropped the helpless girl to the ground. "You imagine you will overcome me at last, do you?"

"Not only that," returned Joe, still advancing toward him, "but I will forever end this hunt. You have been the means of killing my father—you have caused me much trouble—I will stand no more of it."

Redfield drew his revolver, aimed it at Joe, and pulled the trigger.

The hammer snapped, but no explosion followed.

A cry of vexation escaped Redfield, and he threw the weapon aside.

"I will not be thwarted thus," he cried, as he drew his sword. "Only one of us will claim that girl—the bones of the other will find an eternal resting-place in the depths of that lake with my horse."

He rushed toward Joe with his sword poised when the young captain drew out his own pistol and fired at him.

The shot missed its mark!

But one more cartridge remained, and he fired again.

The bullet must have struck the flashing blade of the sword, for it was snapped off close to the handle, and fell to the ground.

"A thousand furies seize you!" cried Redfield, in alarm, as he halted.

"We are on even terms now," exclaimed Joe, with such a strange laugh of reckless determination as to make Redfield's flesh creep. "Lucy Travers has been in your power for the last time!"

He sprang toward Redfield with the fury of a panther, and much to that rascal's surprise grappled with him.

A fierce struggle ensued, the bound and helpless girl being the only witness, and the wild look in her beautiful eyes showed plainly that she realized that her only salvation was in Joe conquering the wretch whom she abhorred with the worst kind of hatred.

Neither of the men possessed weapons, and Redfield counted largely on his superior strength to overwhelm his young adversary.

But Joe had muscles of iron, and his strength seemed to be augmented by the knowledge that the helpless girl had him alone to whom she looked for succor. Besides, when the many wrongs which Redfield heaped upon him arose before his mind it made him perfectly wild.

The scene of their combat, as was said, was on a high plateau overlooking the lake. It was approached by a path leading through a rocky defile, and while he was struggling with his adversary he was too much pre-occupied to notice several dark forms coming up toward the scene of the combat. At one moment it seemed as if Redfield must overcome Joe, for he caught the boy by the hip and the hair on his head, and, exerting all his strength, bent the boy's back down over his knee with the intention of breaking his spine. Luckily, however, he slipped, and Joe was quick to take advantage of his mishap. He glided from the powerful clutch of his enemy, and, seizing Redfield by the throat, he compressed his hands upon his windpipe until the other grew purple to the very lips. Then Joe pushed him back, but Redfield, with demoniacal fury, lurled his body against Joe, and together they fell over on the edge of the cliff, where they writhed with all their strength.

"I've got you now!" suddenly exclaimed Redfield.

"No! You would hurl me over, eh? Never!"

"We shall see!" panted the other.

"Joe! Joe!" shrieked Lucy, "oh, do not let him master you!"

That thrilling cry nerved the youth like electricity. Redfield had raised him in his arms over his head to precipitate him bodily over the appalling height, when Joe caught him about the neck. Unfortunately, the impulse Redfield had given his body was too much to withstand, and as he sent Joe with violent momentum out toward the lake, the

youth still retaining his hold on his enemy's neck, he dragged him with him. The next moment both went over.

Joe struck a tree growing from the side of the cliff.

But Redfield clung to him like death.

It was fully two hundred feet below them.

A wild shriek of dismay had burst from the terrified girl's lips as she saw them go over that frightful height together, and as Joe clung to the sapling, with Redfield a few feet below him, hanging by his hands to a slender branch, he heard many other voices up on the top of the cliff.

"Mortimer!" suddenly cried Redfield. "For God's sake, help me!"

"What is the matter with you?"

"My hands are slipping from this branch with the bark."

"I owe you no pity."

"True! true! I beg your forgiveness for the injury I have done you. Let down your body, and let me catch hold of your foot before I lose my hold."

"Shall I do it?" thought Joe.

A few moments before they strove to take each other's life.

And now that he had the chance, would he—Joe—snatch the rascal from the very jaws of a deserved death? For the sapling to which Joe clung was solid enough to sustain the weight of both, and they might reach the top of the cliff again, as the sapling was not far down.

It was a struggle between Joe's good and evil nature—a bitter struggle.

At last he came to a conclusion—he was too generous.

"I will help you!" he cried.

"Quick—quick! I am slipping fast!" came the despairing cry from beneath him in hollow, anguished tones, and the youth could hear the ominous snapping and creaking of the slender, fragile branch to which the rascal clung for dear life. It was a mere nothing between Redfield and death, and the delay of a second would prove fatal.

CHAPTER XXI.

AS SEEN BY LIGHTNING.

Redfield's position was exceedingly precarious.

He hung to the slender branch of a sapling, as Joe could see by the lurid lightning which was flashing over the circular lake, about five feet beneath the young captain. A strong wind was blowing, oscillating his body to and fro like the pendulum of a clock, each movement making the frail branch snap and crack ominously. His terrified face was upturned to the boy, whom he had sworn to kill, and a piteous and wildly-pleading look stamped every lineament. Above Joe's head, a dozen feet, was the edge of the cliff, and he saw the faces of several rough-looking men peering down upon him. Two hundred feet below the two imperiled men the dark water of the strange lake was lashed to foam by the tempest, which now began to rage with appalling fury. The desperate clutch which Redfield had upon the sapling was not strong enough to hold him, for the reason that the bark was slipping off the sappy branch, and unless he received instant relief a frightful fall was his fate.

Joe's heart was touched by the peril of the rascal, despite the many wrongs Redfield had done him, and his generous nature succumbed.

He would forget his injuries and aid the unfortunate wretch.

The deep groans of his cousin were painful as he hung clinging.

"Joe, Joe!" he wailed, in anguished tones, "in the name of Heaven, hurry up, or I am lost! I slip! Oh, I am going—I am going!"

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He would forget his injuries and aid the unfortunate wretch.

A shudder convulsed Joe from head to foot.

He glanced down at the black abyss with a cold feeling of horror at his heart, and from his lips there came a groan of pity at his cousin's awful fate.

He was not aware that people were calling him for some time.

When he was finally recalled to his surroundings he heard the voices.

"Hullo!—hulloa!" came a shout above him.

He looked up and saw the rough-looking men peering down at him over the edge of the cliff. A thrill of joy passed over him at this welcome sight.

"Help! help!" he shouted, hoarsely.

His voice was lost in the growling and rumbling of the thunder, but he fancied he heard a responsive shout, and presently a rope was lowered to him.

He made it fast to his body and was hauled up to the top of the cliff.

In the midst of a score of fishermen who surrounded him Lucy sprang into his arms with a sob of joy.

The crowd was silent.

"Thank God!" breathed the poor girl, "you are safe!"

"Redfield," said Joe, solemnly, "is dead."

"He deserved his fate," she replied.

"And these men?" he whispered.

"Are fishermen from the village."

"Englishmen, are they not?"

"Every one of them, and good friends, too."

"How did they know we were here?"

One of the men overhearing this question advanced and replied:

"We followed you. Your men around the village told us who the men were who came in the bark, and asked our aid, after telling us of your fate."

"And now?" asked Joe, nervously.

"When we left the village, with the knowledge that the captain of that craft abducted this young lady, and started after you to lend you our assistance to save her if we could, the men of the village were informed that the sailors of the Dragon were ashore. We left them preparing to fight the Dragon's men."

"I cannot say how grateful I am," said Joe, emotionally. "The captain of that dastardly crew, my cousin, is now dead. If you can capture his men and turn them over to the proper authorities, their vessel is yours."

"We, sir," replied the fisherman, who was evidently a man of good education, "do not ask reward for our assistance. We will lend it cheerfully. On the other hand, if no claimants appear for the Dragon, it would be an invaluable addition to our small fleet, for we are all poor men."

"Then come," said Joe, "let us hasten back and discover what has been done."

"Have you a conveyance?"

"My horse stands there."

"And we came in a wagon."

"Then let me mount with the lady and precede you. I am anxious to learn what has been done, for the reason that Redfield ordered his men to scuttle my yacht if they had the chance."

"Very good, sir; mount and I will assist this lady into the saddle with you. But after all we will have to accompany you," he added after a little thought.

"Why?" queried Joe. "This wagon will go so slow——"

"Can you not see that it would be impossible for you to regain the village without a guide? You do not know the road through its intricate windings."

"Too true," said Joe. "Well—come on—all together then."

They were soon under way, and in one hour reached the village.

By the time its outskirts were reached they were drenched by the rain.

The sound of pistol shots reached their ears coming from the seashore.

"Ah!" ejaculated Joe, "they are at it already."

A sharp drive through the village showed a scene of confusion.

At the doors of the huts stood the wives and children of the fishermen, wailing and weeping, and wringing their hands, while to their ears were borne the sounds of firearms and men's voices in a wild babel of confusion.

Lights were darting here and there, and when the brilliant gleaming of the lightning fluid shot through the sulphurous atmosphere, they could see a large concourse of fishermen in the attire peculiar to their calling, all in a commotion upon the shoreline, while on the beach the Dragon's men were gathered, heading for their vessel as they went.

The whole scene explained itself.

Joe stopped before one of the huts.

"Lucy," cried he, "remain here till I return. I must join my men."

"No," returned the girl quietly. "I must go with you, Joe."

"The danger is too great. You must not be exposed to it."

"Where you go I go too."

"Do not be rash. I will not take you."

"Then I will follow you."

At this moment an aged minister came up to them.

"God protect the people of my parish!" he exclaimed.

"Are all the fishermen engaged, sir?" asked Joe.

"All. They have joined the sailors of yonder yacht."

"Do me the favor to take care of this young lady for me," said Joe.

"Joe," she commenced remonstratingly.

He whispered something in her ear which brought a bright flush to her pretty face, and although she alighted from his horse, and accompanied the good minister, she cast a wistful glance after him as he drove away to the seashore.

When Joe galloped up to the rest of the fishermen, who had gone on to their fellows, they had all joined Joe's sailors. By this time the sailors from the Dragon, with Springer leading them, had reached the bark, and hurried on board.

A cheer greeted Joe as he flung himself from his horse.

"They've give us the slip!" cried Jack Topstay, "but we giv' 'em a hard fight."

"Are the boats to be found?"

"Ay ay, sir," said Jack. "They are up the beach a bit."

"Then let all of you embark at once. We must not let those rascals escape. Call a pilot to guide us out of here, for Redfield is dead!"

The fishermen understood the whole circumstances, and the best pilot embarked with Joe and his sailors. They were pulled toward the Nymph just as the Dragon with sails half raised slipped her anchor and glided away in the teeth of the furious storm.

Joe saw them attempt to fire one of the guns at the yacht in passing, with no little anxiety upon his mind, as he did not know that Juno had spiked the ordnance. The gunner was as much surprised as Joe was that the gun would not work, but they had no time to tarry, and before any damage could be done the Dragon had sped on far out of range.

Outside of the headland the storm was terrific.

When Joe and his men reached the sloop they were challenged by the watch and passed on board. The boats were hoisted on the davits, a double reef hastily taken in the main sheet, and a small storm staysail was rigged forward.

Then the anchor was hoisted, and as the pilot seized the stick the Nymph rushed away out through the dangerous rocks to the heaving ocean.

By the light of the incessant lightning Joe saw the Dragon heading westward up the coast. To all appearances she had too much sail crowded on, and every few moments was obliged to luff up before the howling wind.

Looking back toward the village from which direction the tide was setting along the coast, he saw several of the villagers coming after him in their small boats, under double-reefed sails.

"You all have proven very kind," he said to the pilot.

"Ay," returned the old fellow. "Any one in distress we help."

"Don't you think the Dragon is overcrowded with canvas?"

"She can't stand it much longer; it will capsize her."

A gun boomed from the deck of the fugitive at this moment, and the ball came howling and humming toward them, but fell short of its mark.

"Hallo! they have opened the ball!" exclaimed Joe.

"Have you any guns on board?" queried the pilot.

"Four fifty-pounders."

"Then have a fling at him just for sport."

The seething, curling waves were boiling up all around the yacht, and spray dashed over her bows by the ton as she clove the huge waves.

Joe dispatched a gunner forward, and soon his ordnance spoke.

Those on the bark returned the useless fire as long as the lightning lasted.

But the storm was passing over, and the flashes now only came at long intervals. Suddenly there sounded a frightful crash ahead, followed by loud cries of distress, and the pilot burst out laughing.

"What is the matter?" demanded Joe, in alarm.

"I have crowded them so close on shore," replied the pilot, "that I have run them aground. Wait till the lightning gleams again, and—"

"Here it is now!" cried Joe.

A lurid zig-zag far off to the westward glared up.

By its light they saw the Dragon lying on her side—beached!

The waves and surf broke over her, and the frightened sailors were springing from her decks into the hissing waves, and swimming for the shore. A scene of the utmost dismay and confusion was apparent on the deck of the shored bark.

The yacht came up into the wind with fiercely flapping sails just as the last of the crew on the Dragon sprang overboard, leaving the vessel totally deserted, with wave upon wave dashing and breaking over her.

It was plain to be seen by the lightning, when it played across the murky sky, that some of the unlucky rascals struggled hard with the heavy waves a while, only to succumb at last and go down. Others reached the shore exhausted, while some were carried far away to the westward by the fierce currents eddying and breaking about the sunken reefs and rocks along the coast. Perhaps their fate could have been worse had the Dragon been wrecked in midocean.

The pilot had been carefully watching the waves, and measuring the probabilities of saving the stranded vessel, for he saw that the storm was gradually subsiding, and when the tide went down it must leave the Dragon high and dry upon the jutting strip of sand.

"Are you willing to lend me a quarter boat?" he at length asked Joe.

"Certainly, but it would be utter madness to venture into that sea."

"You do not know we islanders," said the pilot with a smile. "We are accustomed to going to sea in a cockle-shell. I must get the mudhook of yonder bark down ere those waves wash her from the strand. If you will take the tiller, keep the yacht luffed up in the wind, and hold her off shore, I will attempt the job."

Joe assented, and shortly afterward the pilot was rowing toward the Dragon in a skillful manner, which safely brought him to the vessel, and soon after he heaved the anchor and returned. The other boats from the village now surrounded the yacht, and when the pilot returned on board the fleet returned to anchorage at the village, when men were sent up the coast to make the bark secure. Joe went ashore and found Lucy and Matilda Brown in one of the huts attending to Juno, who had been roughly handled by the English inn-keeper. The two sailors and the brutal Englishman had been wounded by Joe, and were taken care of by a friend of the tavern-keeper. A week later the three disappeared from the village.

Nothing was ever seen of the few of Redfield's crew who escaped to the shore alive from the Dragon, and it was supposed that they made their way to Saint George, where all traces of them was lost.

Subsequently, when the villagers floated off the Dragon into deep water at a high tide, they found several bodies of those unfortunate wretches who perished in their battle with the waves to escape from the bark.

Joe and his men remained ashore in the village a week, during which interval the young captain was married to Lucy by the good minister in whose care he had left her.

Juno was then sufficiently recovered to go on board, and after bidding farewell to the good villagers and amply rewarding them for the kindness they had displayed, the yachtsmen and ladies embarked, canvas was raised, and with a good whole-sail breeze they left the island of Grenada forever.

A week's cruise brought the Nymph to St. Thomas, and Captain Hawkins was again found with his jolly tropers quartered in Mortimer Hall. The good captain had kept his trust faithfully, and had taken excellent care of all Joe's effects. The property was sold, and after embarking once more on the yacht, the bowsprit was turned northward, and after an uneventful cruise she reached New York.

Here Joe sought out his aunt, received his father's patrimony, and sold the diamonds. They brought an enormous sum, as the stones were of the finest kind, and when he divided the net proceeds into ten equal parts, every one of his men were made wealthy. Matilda Brown was so devoted to Lucy she ever after remained with her and her young husband. The Nymph yet serves Joe as a pleasure yacht, and his crew who never left him are the devoted hearts who helped him to recover the deep sea treasure.

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